

The Eternal Chinese Storyteller in Ren Min Gong Di

A study of how Taiwanese artists render socio-political criticism in Henrik Ibsen's En folkefiende by introducing Chinese stagecraft

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Chapter I

Introduction

Tendency in previous interpretations of En folkefiende

Charon Film, a Swedish film production house, completed a documentary TV series, The Planet, as Planeten in Swedish, in 2006. This environment-oriented documentary has been recently broadcasted by NRK. In the series, the suggestion to broaden estimated aspects in the valuation of economic growth was proposed. Interviewees in the series criticize that most present economic studies exclude the environmental costs, such as pollution, consumption of irreclaimable energy and natural resources. They urge economists to reconsider to include environmental costs in their evaluation. Uttered by the interviewees, constructional reform is to be taken by existent economic studies, so that the public may see this hidden, but monstrous, cost and how the cost, being rather continual, impoverishes the earth. Several clips in the series with fanatic shoppers crowding into mega-stores during seasonal sale hints that human beings' indulgence in consumerism and excessive consumption may be the main causes of exorbitant waste, which accelerates the exhaustion of remnant resources.

The narrative of the series may be suggestive and its claim may sound much like cliché, aiming at the consumption as if it were the original sin. But its proclamation indicates an important tendency in the modern intellectual sphere: studies, researches, and resolutions may no longer be practiced with the restraints of conventionally professional or academic boundaries. Boundary-crossing approaches are encouraged. According to the opinion of the interviewees in The Planet, environmentalists should

intrude other fields, such as economics, which seems to be unrelated, to express the impendency of their concern. If so, this strategic claim will not only enhance general public's concern of the environment but also undermine the present perception of economic studies. Different disciplines influence one another, changing others and changed by others. Interdisciplinary approaches are imminently and commonly needed. More importantly, interdisciplinary approaches often facilitate alternative perspectives and the novelty of these perspectives is to be the display in which the evolution of varied schools will be shown.

Modern scientists sense this tendency, so they turn to other fields for more effective methods or materials to address the significance of their finding, observation, or criticism in natural science. Literature becomes one of their abundant sources. Apart from scientific evidence, scientists rely on the literary works as a convention to help public understand their concerns. In scientists' various interpretations or applications of literature, new conceptual views are given. By these current views, literary works are revalued and being reconsidered for their relevance to the modern readership, especially for its expansion to other fields. Therefore, though there is risk to propagandize Ibsen's En folkefiende, scientists' interpretations should not be entirely ignored. By paralleling their contemporary issues with Tomas Stockmann's, scientists or environmentalists articulate better those dilemmas they confront.

Yearn Hong Choi, once an Assistant for Environmental Quality in the Office of Secretary of Defense in the U.S., values literature as an important approach for the general public to understand estimating principles in environmental matters. He proposes that literature would be a resolution to enhance the general public's participation in environmental affairs while expert knowledge of natural sciences,

which has been primary in this field for making decisions, is not well spread. Choi stresses that literature gives “insight, vision, and wisdom” which are “accessible through neither science and technology nor common sense.” In Choi’s view, literature is also instructive and educational in other aspects. For literary lessons of the bureaucratic modern world, Choi names Kafka’s Castle and Trial. Regarding ecological issues, he reckons Ibsen’s En folkefiende. (Choi 1983: 37-8)

Choi considers “[Tomas] Stockmann deserves what he gets in the play.” Yet, he depreciates Peter Stockmann’s conduct and the support offered by townspeople. He calls En folkefiende “a condemnation of democratic government.” Presenting En folkefiende, he explains that governmental act has been greatly intervened by personal interest, namely enterprises’ profitability or economical concerns. (Choi 1983: 38)

Choi finds that En folkefiende indicates the same crisis experienced in the U.S. Many cities in the U.S. refuse to raise the tax rate to provide means for the necessary improvement of local water supply. As an example, Choi presents the urgent case in Jackson, Mississippi. Explained by Choi, the water in Jackson endangers citizens’ health, containing excessive substance that possibly results in cancer. Choi declares that Jackson is not the only victim threatened by deteriorating water plants that were built in the country during Woodrow Wilson’s presidency. He states that immediate renovation for these water plants is unavoidable and condemns American citizens’ abusive practice of democracy for their acts against requisite support. He argues that tortured democracy is currently driven by those amoral and irrational citizens without environmental concerns. He links their indifference to the accusation against Tomas Stockmann by townspeople in En folkefiende. Choi praises Dr. Tomas Stockmann’s for being an ingenuous scientist. In conclusion, Choi demands educational and

political reform, suggesting En folkefiende to be sufficient to enlighten the citizens' dusted conscious. (Choi 1983: 39-40)

Paul Lindholdt links En folkefiende to modern Hollywood productions, Silkwood, A Civil Action, and Erin Brokovich to utter the importance of environmental-concerned works nowadays. In Lindholdt's view, these three successful cinematic works, which deal with "green" themes, prove that environmentally oriented works are not necessarily only propaganda. Comparing with other literary genres, Lindholdt considers the drama seldom takes up "green" themes. Environmental dramas are rather uncommon. Lindholdt's explanation is that dramatists in the past were less interested in ecological issues than modern ones for the heat of such issues was much milder in the past, especially before the Industrial Revolution. Lindholdt also notes the increasing interest among teachers in involving "environmentally inflected arts" in the natural science education in order to answer students' contemporary demands. (Lindholdt 2001: 53)

After summarizing of the plot in En folkefiende, Lindholdt introduces the significance of Arthur Miller's adaptation of the play in 1950. Lindholdt first clarifies why critics, in the early days, interpreted Miller's adaptation as an allusion to the McCarthy era. Miller, reputed as a socialist, had to defend himself before the House Un-American Activities Committee, which held a series of hearings led by Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy. Miller's adaptation took place in 1950 and it was published while hearings at the House Un-American Activities Committee were ongoing.

Accomplished in 1953, Miller's The Crucible was interpreted in the same way. According to Lindholdt's quotation, The Crucible was viewed by Robert G. Lambert as a continued manifestation against McCarthyism, following the adaptation of En

folkefiende. Nevertheless, Lindholdt emphasizes Miller's adaptation carries "greater universal appeal and power." As Lindholdt notes, Miller, rather obliquely, alludes merely once to the McCarthy era in the Preface of his adaptation. Miller refused to confine his work to be only a political criticism, but he publicly recognized En folkefiende's rising reference to environmentalism at a later age. (Lindholdt 2001: 54)

Lindholdt writes, "Miller's emphasis shifted, from the "democratic guarantees" and individual freedoms of 1950, to ecological depredations and contamination in his 1989 commentary on the play" (2001: 57). However, Miller argues the contamination of the water in En folkefiende to be an "occasion" instead of a "theme." Yet, as traced by Lindholdt in Miller's other texts, Miller considers that Ibsen's parallel of ethical taint and environmental pollution should not be overlooked (Lindholdt 2001: 57).

Lindholdt proceeds with stressing the important role that natural resources play in the drama. Applying Miller's observation, Lindholdt assumes that "nature" is expected to be the new practitioner in which ethical consciousness would be accommodated, since human beings, as depicted in the drama, are no longer reliable to be morally sustained. It is the nature that remains allying with morality. To strengthen this point, Lindholdt adds observation of the trend that a few disciples of the once "radical Left" switched their venues to "the environment and art," reciting Miller's claim that the concurrent fights of moral and environmental aspects in the drama should not be underestimated (2001: 58).

In his interpretation, Lindholdt also features the environmental affairs to be a fight where individual activists encounter large corporations. He considers that Peter Stockmann's compelling concerns of town prosperity resembles the American corporations' defense for their profit. The corporations, with great resistance, often

prevails the authority, which defends human health. (Lindholdt 2001: 58-9) Peter Stockmann accuses Tomas to be destructive to the town life and he threatens Tomas with the legal process that he may enable. Uttered by Lindholdt, the legal act is a common approach that modern businesses would take against environmental activists, since corporations with enormous assets tend to endure longer in the legal process than most conquering individuals can (Lindholdt 2001: 63).

Lindholdt finds the most notorious danger, industrial pollution, on which corporations have been always rigorously assaulted, sufficiently expressed in a intricately layered mode by Morten Kiil's tannery, but Lindholdt interprets not only substantial pollution, but also the abstract one. Lindholdt views Morten Kiil's conditionally adopting scientific fact (findings of Tomas Stockmann) to be an example to show that natural science has been "polluted." Natural science may also be subjectively applied while other humanity subjects, such as "gender, class, or race," are "socially constructed" (Lindholdt 2001: 60). Lindholdt assumes the pollution caused by Kiil's tannery to be a result of technological application. As Lindholdt stresses, Kiil's very fault is that he searches for the solution for pollution, which is resulted from practice of technology, within the field of technology. The advancing technology is repeatedly condemned in the drama, being a contrast to Tomas Stockmann's effort to preserve the nature. Moreover, Lindholdt points out that Kiil's tannery deprives the nature in two ways: turning the coat of beasts into supply of human costumes and poisoning the water by cleansing processed leather with it. (Lindholdt 2001: 60) Lindholdt reads Kiil's questionable ethics in his intervening with scientific knowledge and in Kiil's attempt to corrupt Tomas Stockmann by turning the legacy to be investment on the polluted properties, showing that the scientific *métier* is still strongly attached to intentional interference. Here, Lindholdt endeavors to show that environmental pollution and

moral corruption are not separable.

Lindholdt considers that Tomas' wife, Katrine, reminds the spectators of the sacrifice bound to risk for an advocate in the environmental fight. Lindholdt argues that Katrine's audible worries of the future for their children and of their economic crisis strengthens Tomas Stockmann's selfless devotion and solidity depicted in the play.

(Lindholdt 2001: 62)

Fredrik Engelstad, in his analysis of Holberg's Erasmus Montanus, Ibsen's En folkefiende, and Bjørneboe's Semmelweis, discusses the three plays' affinity, i.e., the communally collective conventions, customs, and restrictions, which are much often offended by updated scientific findings or new claims of intellectuals. Engelstad considers all the three plays to be "still pertinent to an examination of contemporary scientific theory and ethics in research" (Engelstad 1995: 17). Both Holberg's Erasmus and Bjørneboe's Dr. Semmelweis are forced to oppose their communities for sticking with their scientific proclamations as well as Tomas Stockmann. First, Engelstad observes intentional interfering in the knowledge in Erasmus Montanus. He notes that Holberg criticizes both the learned for their mischief by turning "scientific knowledge" to be their "personal power" and the rabid majority for their fanatic defense for their customary belief (Engelstad 1995: 18). Depicted by Bjørneboe, Dr. Semmelweis has to convince his colleagues that their unclean hands after gynecological practice is the main cause of the spreading disease, talking them into sanitization of their hands. For professional dignity, Semmelweis's colleagues refuse to admit such an accusation, which is considered to be an insult against their noble métier as to be the savior for the people (Engelstad 1995: 22-3). Back to Tomas Stockmann, Engelstad brings forward his "arrogance and vanity that often follow

academic superiority” (1995: 20). In Engelstad’s comparison, Stockmann does not encounter an innocent and ignorant community as Erasmus does. Instead, townspeople in En folkefiende are restricted by entangling “mutual interdependence.” In Engelstad’s words, “they are caught in the grip of others” (1995: 21). Thus, to ensure their interwoven network of various interests not to collapse, they must unify to twist Tomas Stockmann’s utterance while realizing the danger of the polluted spring.

Engelstad also notes that there are two types of “truth” in En folkefiende. He divides them to be “empirical” and “visionary.” As explained by Engelstad, Tomas Stockmann first devotes himself to publicizing scientific findings—the “empirical.” After being rejected by his brother and local paper editors, he then proceeds with the search for “the truth about society”—the “visionary.” (Engelstad 1995: 21,25)

Engelstad indicates the polarity seen in Ibsen’s drama: “the elite” makes intellectual advances while “the masses” steadfastly resist with the achievement from “the avant-garde of the previous generation” (1995: 21-2). In Engelstad’s view, Stockmann’s criticism of the majority is so severe that Stockmann distrust the public can be cultivated with “the social self-awareness necessary for true insight” (1995: 22). In his conclusion, Engelstad attributes the majority’s resistance against the new knowledge or findings to “conventional thought, social interests, and personal integrity.” He considers them to be the common and major causes. By linking the three plays with one another from different eras, Engelstad stresses that the three causes mentioned above are still relevant nowadays. This typical confrontation is still seen when new perspectives proposed by scientists or scholars challenge our perception.

Among the three modern critics mentioned above, Choi and Engelstad treat the drama as a catalyst to evoke the attention to their regards in the researches of science.

Lindholdt notes the rising interest of the play's American adaptor in environmental affairs and stresses the pollution's unquestionably focal position in the drama.

Mentioned by Lindholdt, compared with other criticisms uttered in drama, significant ecological awareness is rather recent. Choi, Engelstad, Lindholdt have touched upon the pollution as a decisive metaphor in their readings of En folkefiende. Since their interpretations are rather recent, their tendency to provoke criticism by detailed deduction of pollution may be considered to be consequences of the existing "greening" conscience. Moreover, issues related to democracy, judicial system, and modern predominate capitalists are discussed in their interpretations as well as issues in environmental affairs. Though themes in these interpretations are not unprecedented, it is clear that these critics endeavor to utter their reflections by analyzing En folkefiende. Their interpretations prove contemporary researches in other fields to be effective in guiding, revealing, varying, and affecting critique or critical approach in literary studies.

Such thematic applications are not found only within scientists' circle. Robert B. Heilman reaffirms the play's allusions to the problematic modern mass media. Heilman, to embody his criticism of the defective modern journalism, points out the fact that many writers have foreseen and predicted media's abusive power in literary works. With this respect, Heilman includes creations from Tobias Smollett, William Makepeace Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, George Bernard Shaw, Tom Stoppard, etc. Hardly surprising, Ibsen's En folkefiende is mentioned and discussed. With their

literary works, Heilman summarizes how protagonists are troubled by pigheaded editors or journalists who are in charge of the media. Heilman also collects various non-fictional texts, retelling many writers' personal encounter with journalists or their satirical criticism of modern media. In Heilman's discussion, the mass media are criticized for self-deceit, monopolization of the public informative device, and the intrusion into personal affairs.

Heilman points out that Shaw characterizes the mass media in his The Doctor's Dilemma with "self-interest" and combines it with "ignorance of other matters." To mock the overbearing professionals in the media, Shaw makes "the reporter" often misspell words or expressions given by his interviewees. By doing so, Shaw not only attempts to show reporters' poor knowledge in language, but, in Heilman's words, "that he hears the opposite of what was said as that he hears spoken words entirely in terms of the clichés of his trade and his time" (Heilman 1985: 45). Heilman condemns the media's intentional abuse of actuality.

Condemning the imperious media, Heilman describes their dubious principles in dealing with privacy and writes,

The papers, of course, are rather charmingly inconsistent. When for whatever reason—and it may be a good one—they decide not to air a given subject, they are a little absentminded about our right to know. What their position often boils down to in practice, perhaps without their knowing it, is something like this: *we* alone have the right to decide what *you* have a right to know. Or alternatively, *you* have a right to know if and when *we* say *you* have [his italics] (Heilman 1985: 50).

Heilman continues to criticize how the “freedom of the press” is ironically abused. He expounds media’s maltreat by one of Trollope’s works. In The Warden, John Bold suspects that the finances at the church are misappropriated by Mr. Harding, a caretaker of the sanatorium for the elder at the local cathedral. To utter his criticism, John Bold makes the influential newspaper, Jupiter, to draw the public’s attention to this misbehavior by asking help from an old-time acquaintance, Tom Towers, a journalist at the paper. Bold later finds his charge on Mr. Harding to be false, and then asks Tom Towers to cease the attack on Mr. Harding. Tom Towers pretentiously defends for “freedom of the press,” reviling Bold’s intention to hinder the public’s “right to know” (Heilman 1985: 51-3).

Finding numerous affinities within En folkefiende and other works, Heilman discusses Billing and Hovstad’s inconsistent support for Tomas Stockmann. For publishing Tomas Stockmann’s scientific findings, Hovstad’s real motives are to undermine the authority in town and to gain political power for his own sake. Hovstad considers the political influence to be dependant on the approval of majority. Persuaded by Peter, Hovstad withdraws his support for Tomas Stockmann after he learns about the potential damage, which Tomas Stockmann’s findings may cause to the town’s economics, namely the majority’s profit. Hovstad defends himself with news editors’ “duty to society.” Hovstad’s inconsistency is shown again in the fifth act when he attempts to confirm with the Stockmanns for the possible financial profit by the lowered stock price after Tomas Stockmann’s finding has been spread. By these observations, Heilman remarks that Hovstad’s belief in populism is not out of a commonwealth concern, but rather out of its convenience for his personal interest. He criticizes that Hovstad disguises his subjective interference in public matters with an

ostensible obligation, which is often claimed by the media. (Heilman 1985: 41-3)

By accumulating literary incarnations of journalistic professionals, Heilman clarifies his multi-faceted criticism. Heilman's account is an exemplary of how a scholar depends on literary works to place criticism. Heilman makes modern readers applaud for these writers' prophecy, which is aimed at the decline of journalism, while he applies their works to elucidate his criticism, showing the relevance between these anticipating works and the actuality.

Mordecai Roshwald lays his critique of democracy in Ibsen's drama, sympathizing with the isolated spokespersons of the truth for their denial of compliance with the majority. Focusing his discussion of Ibsen's play on the unavoidable conflict found in the modern democracy, Roshwald examines Tomas Stockmann's fight in which he is bound to lose. He describes the character as an "alienated moralist." He links Tomas' accusation against the majority in town to Alexis-Charles-Henri Clérel de Tocqueville's warning of abusive and "absolute" power compelled by majority. Uttering in his Democracy In America, Tocqueville, as a French political philosopher, criticizes the overzealous belief in righteousness presented by the majority, which is a result from the democracy rendered by the republican system. Roshwald interprets Ibsen's Tomas Stockmann to be endangered by Tocqueville's prophecy.

Though being affirmative of Tomas Stockmann's uncompromising act as a heroic conduct, Roshwald does not disregard Stockmann's human aspects: his occasional defiance, excess self-confidence, and his competition with Peter Stockmann. When Tomas Stockmann refuses to move to other towns, he shows his distrust in the other communities by presuming that his fellow townspeople's declined conscience would

be a general condition of the whole mankind. Roshwald considers Tomas Stockmann's presumption to be a trace of his overbearing self-pride (2004: 232). As suggested by Roshwald, the finding of harmful substance in the spring, which might jeopardize the expected profit of the bath, should have disappointed Tomas Stockmann for he had devoted himself to plan the construction of the bath, hoping to be one of the contributors to the town's future economics. Rather oppositely, Tomas Stockmann is seemingly gladdened by his finding. Explained by Roshwald, Tomas Stockmann believes that he will gain appreciation and alliance of his fellow natives when he publicizes his finding, by which Peter and the Committee of the bath may be strongly agitated. Thus, by doing so, Tomas Stockmann might be able to avoid being an advocate alienated from his townspeople, but inconstant support from Hovstad, Aslaksen, and Billing, who are later persuaded by Peter Stockmann, forces Tomas Stockmann to search the very origination of the pollution in town. At the end, Tomas Stockmann charges the majority for their deteriorated morality. He chooses to oppose against the public. Unavoidably, after being blithe for his findings shortly, Tomas Stockmann is soon condemned to be "potential traitor." (Roshwald 2004: 228-9) According to Roshwald's observation, Tomas' immediate reaction is not a disturbance caused by a solicitous concern for the fact that the future prosperity of town is uncertain. Instead, Tomas Stockmann is rather delighted by the picture that he would successfully gain townspeople's support and prevail his brother. In Roshwald's interpretation, Tomas Stockmann is completed with heroic dignity, but not without human imperfection.

Nonetheless, Roshwald approves Tomas Stockmann's stubbornness and writes: "He is alienated, but not dejected. He suffers materially, but not morally. His overall sense of spiritual well-being is derived from his sense of having overcome all the temptations

and all the threats, and stood by what is right. He remains a man standing for and committed to moral rectitude—a defiant and militant moralist” (Roshwald 2004: 232). Roshwald affirms Tomas’ uncompromising character and features Tomas Stockmann in an approbatory tone. Most notably in his interpretation, Roshwald situates Tomas Stockmann’s struggle in the quandary caused by democracy, applying Tomas Stockmann’s suffering to reiterate Tocqueville’s sound reflection.

While interpretations are attested by conceptual views derived from other schools, greater legitimacy of such assertions is given to theatrical productions and adaptations. Ibsen’s play is often altered and amended by numerous advocates for inserting their claims in theatre.

Provocative French Stockmann

Erin Williams Hyman interrogates two French theatrical productions by Théâtre de l’Œuvre in the late nineteenth century Paris, discussing their connotations in the social context. Théâtre de l’Œuvre, being a symbolist theatre, produced Ibsen’s En folkefiende in 1893 and Alfred Jarry’s Ubu Roi in 1896. Noted by Hyman, the transition from En folkefiende to Ubu Roi is virtually a clue that the symbolist theatre transfers its dependence on verbal demonstration to gestural one. Hyman also attempts to show how the symbolist theatre adopted anarchists’ theorization of the bombing attack to form a type of “theatrical terror.”

Hyman argues that the symbolist identifies with Tomas Stockmann for their similar marginalized position in the society. Symbolists repeatedly uttered their predicaments and attributed them to the social collective indifference, considering themselves to be sacrificed in the society where the bourgeois plays the mainstream. Symbolists find

themselves to be mistreated by the public as Stockmann is on stage. Tomas Stockmann's inferior social acceptance depicts the avant-garde symbolist's minor social status at the time. (Hyman 2005: 106) By observing the symbolist's similarities with Tomas Stockmann, Hyman reaffirms his statement that "Ibsen's play dramatizes the marginalization of the intellectual and the inefficacy of public speech; the hero, who wants his words to have the power of dynamite, is utterly ignored and ultimately silenced" (2005: 102). Hyman does not only show the affinity between Tomas Stockman and the symbolists, but also the emergence of symbolists' distrust in words or verbal utterance.

However, Hyman credits the theatre's choice of En folkefiende to the play's thematic affinity with the anarchist. The production of En folkefiende was perceived as "a sort of anarchist manifesto" (Hyman 2005: 101). Hyman states that Ibsen's play "make scathing critiques of corrupt authority and the illegitimacy of state power" as well as Jarry's (2005: 101-2). The extreme assault on the populism in En folkefiende easily attracts anarchists' empathy. Hyman gives the fact that Auguste Vaillant, who exploded a bomb at the Chambre des Députés a month after the production's premiere, named Ibsen as one of his inspirers for his attack (2005: 107). The theatre was also aware of its social obligation and potential impact. Even though the symbolist theatre had its aesthetical pursuit in appropriating expressive mode, in which the symbolists' disagreement with the naturalist is seen, the core founding members at Théâtre de l'Œuvre clearly expressed that "the aesthetic aims of Symbolist dramaturgy were on a par with, or even subordinate to, the aim of social and political struggle." Spreading liberal belief, turning violence to be human vitality, arousing energetic generating, and promoting individualism were aims prioritized to the artistic ones. Thus, the symbolist's "obscurantism and esotericism" were paired up with the anarchist's

controversially political proclamation. (Hyman 2005: 103)

In Hyman's view, Ibsen's play also exhibits the hatred between the elite and the mass. The French poet, Laurent Tailhade, had noted this feature more than a century ago. At the premiere, Tailhade made a half-hour-long speech, which praised "the virtues of revolt." He asserts "the masses will bend before strong individuals and will greet in them the only nobility of the future." While reacting variedly, various circles in the audience were commonly and violently agitated. Furthermore, the speech made the police surveil the performance and resulted in imprisonment for a few members of the performing group. As Hyman quotes from a critic, the production enabled spectators' active participation in the performance by pronouncing such a extremist claim (Hyman 2005: 107).

Out of the anarchist's interest, Tomas Stockmann's bodily attack on Hovstad and Billing at the fifth act was interpreted in a symbolical way. Hyman describes the attack to be Tomas Stockmann's "despair over language and his turn to violent action" (2005: 106). This interpretation coincides the shift of the symbolist's reliance. The symbolist leaped from verbal utterance to provocative action. Noted by Hyman, the wish to make "writing" as forceful as "the anarchist bomb" was often seen in the symbolist publication (2005: 106). Tailhade also publicly approved Auguste Vaillant's bomb attack, appreciating Vaillant's "beautiful" act. Following Tailhade, the symbolist adopts the anarchist's bomb attack as a public gesture and aestheticized it for their theatrical event.

Hyman's interrogation shows inter-reference between the theatrical performance and the social battles. In Hyman's elucidation, Ibsen gathered the French anarchists

together while inspiring the French symbolists. The anarchistic activists enlightened the symbolist's artistic pursuit with the spectacular bomb. The symbolists admired its impact and transformed it to be an inclination in their métier. The transition of the symbolist's aesthetical attempt is shown by the modern critic's interpretation of Dr. Stockmann's violent act at the end of En folkefiende, which emphasizes the power derived from physical gesture. Coincidentally, En folkefiende illuminated the French anarchist's frenzied protests in the late nineteenth century. The circular influence unceasingly reciprocates not only between the play, the symbolist, and the anarchist in the nineteenth century, but also the modern interpreter and the past events. This phenomenon perfectly reiterates the boundary-crossing tendency in the intellectual sphere, which is clarified in the discussion of The Planet above. En folkefiende, again, is applied for uttering contemporary issues. In Théâtre de l'Œuvre's case, the play perfectly matched thematically and symbolically for the French social context in the late nineteenth century.

Sympathetic Russian Stockmann

After the French protest, revolutionaries were gathered in Russia by Konstantin Stanislavskij's interpretation. Stanislavskij recalls his experience of preparing the male lead of En folkefiende in My Life In Art. Stanislavskij assumes his Tomas Stockmann to be a personally meaningful and successful occasion in his acting career, but he expresses the paradox in working on plays with sociopolitical concerns. With another role, Satin, Stanislavskij created the role with/under the awareness of its sociopolitical significance. With Tomas Stockmann, he did not. However, Satin's political concern was not perceived while Stockmann's troubled the audience constantly. Stanislavskij claims that he "struck on the line of the intuition of feelings and forgot the politics in the play, which became all the stronger because of it." He

adds “I did not think of politics and tendency, and they created themselves” (1957: 406-7). Marc Slonim also notes that the emphasis of the Moscow Art Theatre’s production was a “tribute to the political excitement of the period” and that “the intelligentsia” took the play as their spokesperson (1963: 136). Stanislavskij remembers, “Not a single performance [of En folkefiende] took place without ovation that resembled demonstrations” (1957: 404). Suspicion of political revolt in the play emerged early. According to the Stanislavskij’s biography by Jean Benedetti, Ibsen’s play was abridged first by Stanislavskij and Nemirovich for their production. However, the amended script still annoyed Prince Shakovskoi with the expression, “revolutionary,” appearing in the fifth act and the prince demanded its removal.

When the Moscow Art Theatre brought their production to St. Petersburg, they encountered the fiercest agitation from the public. The fight for precious entrance to “the private dress rehearsal” arose among the audience. Being alerted by that, the authority made the ushers at the theatre replaced by police officers, which was meant to prevent undesired visitors from crashing into the auditorium. At the dress rehearsal, the audience sensed the concealed suppression. Due to Nemirovich’s opposition, at the company’s opening night in St. Petersburg, the ushers remained and the officers, too, appearing in “evening dress,” instead of uniforms. Nevertheless, the peace did not remain for long. The second night, the frenzied audience reacted with continual applause throughout the fourth act where the public meeting scene was staged. Followed this violent evening, a coincident student riot broke out two weeks later. Its consequences proved to be the most tensed reaction experienced both by the company and the audience. On 13 March 1901, a manifestation at Kazan Square took place, organized by students who were opposed to the execution of an act expelling “uncooperative students.” Many students were arrested but released later the same day.

In the evening, they crowded the theatre where En folkefiende was on. Witnessed by the students, Dr. Stockmann returned home in the fifth act and said: “When you go out to fight for freedom and justice you don’t put on new trousers.” Affected by their failed attempt earlier the same day, students, without doubt, emotionally identified with Dr. Stockmann. Though Stanislavskij’s inflection was tranquil, a strong empathic tie, which connected the spectators and the performer, was formed after this scene. Stanislavskij even arranged tickets for these students. In this peculiar performance, the political reference was greatly enhanced to the extent that all the participants at the theatre of the evening expected the police’s arrest to cease the performance at any time. (Benedetti 1999: 116-8, 120-1)

Stanislavskij’s peculiar experience shows that the social context ultimately guides the audience and the public’s perception, but the play’s significance in social matters is not unprecedented. During the development of his incarnation, Stanislavskij was conscious of the play’s potentially sociopolitical impact. Yet, he intentionally interpreted by following the “intuition of feelings” instead of pressing the political assertion, and his artistic transcendence was acknowledged. For his merit in interpreting Dr. Stockmann, Stanislavskij gained the recognition as “Russia’s greatest actor” (Benedetti 1999: 116). Artistically acclaimed, the sociopolitical influence of Stanislavskij’s interpretation did not weigh less. The tumult caused by the Moscow Art Theatre’s production is certainly and sequentially expected, though not by Stanislavskij.

Arthur Miller contributes his vernacular adaptation of the play, but it is both applauded and criticized. David Bronsen deliberates to show the divergencies between Ibsen’s play and Arthur Miller’s adaptation. He manifestly opposes the

studies that have underestimated En folkefiende to be an inferior one among Ibsen's works. He reckons Ibsen's play to be "a study in ambiguity in which the lines between good and evil are less clearly drawn than these critic would have us believe" (Bronsen 1968-9: 229). Affirming Ibsen's merit, he criticizes Arthur's adaptation "is marked by a decidedly different bias," and argues that Miller's shortened rearrangement is not necessary. He considers Miller's work to be trivial and "more the work of a technician than that of a masterly craftsman" (Bronsen 1968-9: 229, 231). By pointing out that "Miller condensed the original at the expense of the play's complexity and those passages which were too unconventional for him to handle," Bronsen is very skeptical about Miller's renewal and questions Miller's motives (1968-9: 233). Compared by Bronsen, Ibsen cunningly makes his opinions "never stated but revealed in terms of hard actions" while Miller is troubled by "overstatement" and expressively reiterates his claims in the fear that they may not be perceived (1968-9: 233). Bronsen severely depreciates Miller's adaptation, saying that "Miller proves himself less of the artist in having to simplify Stockmann in order to make this play prove its thesis" (1968-9: 235).

Bronsen's discussion of Tomas Stockmann can largely represent the essence in his criticism of Miller's oversimplification. Bronsen thinks Ibsen's and Miller's Dr. Stockmanns are rather different in their manners and considers Miller's altering to be a way to make easy path for the character. He assumes Ibsen's Tomas Stockmann to be a "hero," but "a dubious and egotistical" one, and also states that Ibsen is rather ambivalent about his "less-than-perfect hero" (Bronsen 1968-9: 229-30). Bronsen notes that Miller's concise description of the character (including those for other characters) unavoidably oversimplifies the role and risks to "inadvertently verge on caricature," considering this idiosyncratic feature to be Miller's, not Ibsen's (1968-9:

232). Miller also omits a great part of Ibsen's fourth act where Tomas Stockmann's main utterance is placed. In Bronsen's view, Miller's omission might be beneficial for audience's sake, since Tomas Stockmann's long and aimless speech "inevitably tries the patience of a modern audience" (1968-9: 239). But Bronsen argues that Stockmann's speech is "intended to provoke and give hurt" (1968-9: 239). Miller misses these aspects in characterization of Dr. Stockmann while shortening this important scene. Bronsen values Stockmann's "temperament" given by Ibsen and regards it to be a key to render "the discrepancy between his [Tomas Stockmann's] self-image and the reality of his behavior" (1968-9: 230). Confirming with Roshwald's observation mentioned earlier, Ibsen intricately reveals human faults in his heroic character and Bronsen considers it to be Ibsen's mastering in characterization. Bronsen clearly states his disapproval of Miller's adaptation, condemning for its stereotyping characters and its consequential oversimplification.

But Bronsen does not debase all Miller's attempts. Bronsen accepts some alterations in Miller's adaptation. For example, instead of being hinted by Aslaksen's anxiety for hiding Tomas Stockmann's writing, Peter Stockmann finds it by Aslaksen's revelation. Instead from Peter, Tomas Stockmann learns about the changed will from Morten Kiil directly. Instead of a printer, Aslaksen becomes a publisher who can be much more dominating. These alterations are considered to be more logical. Bronsen also notes Miller extends Tomas Stockmann's incarceration by adding a "subpoena" that Peter possibly enables. However, these changes does not sufficiently reverse Bronsen's view. Bronsen holds negative opinions about Miller's adaptation and shows the danger of turning a play to be propaganda.

The scope and plan of my thesis

By grouping interpretations or production researches above, my purpose is to show the boundary crossing approaches uttered in The Planet has commonly been seen in the practice of Ibsen's En folkefiende. For its conspicuously harsh criticism, En folkefiende has been conveniently involved with the scrutiny of the mass media, politics, and the recent awareness of ecological concerns. All the literary interpretations presented above are made in the light of studies other than literature or theatre, stressing the fact that critics, artists, and activists continuously attest their attempts by Ibsen's play.

Whether it is out of their intention or not, artists' representations of the play are often read to be demonstrations of socio-political criticism. For example, Stanislavskij refused to confine his incarnation within the battle in political issues, but the social impact of its result is impossible to mistake. Without much effort, Stanislavskij's audience, who were arrested at the student riot, formed the connotation particularly to their social battles. Contrasting with Stanislavskij, the artists at Théâtre de l'Œuvre in Paris purposely made their piece to be a clear and political provocation. French performers explicitly pronounced their socio-political criticism and their audience gave immediate, maybe even ruthless, response. Tumult, both in and out of the theatre, can never be detached from the staging of Ibsen's play. In Miller's case, Miller is condemned for oversimplification caused by deliberate revelation of criticism asserted by him, but he publicly denied his adaptation to be only a protest against the political oppression. As Lindholdt discusses, interpretations that link Miller's works to his political inclination in a typical biographical sense largely formed the reference of anti-McCarthyism. Yet, they are challenged now by Lindholdt with recent ecological concerns. All their cases show that the social context plays an important role in

interpretation and perception of Ibsen's play as well as the artists' proposed understanding.

In addition, all the studies accumulated above show that the critique and its conveyance (or the mode of conveyance) correlatively influence one another. Though I stressed earlier to observe the merits of boundary-crossing approach, interpreters' inclination, which is resulted from intentional criticism, does cause misinterpretation as well as sophisticated reflection. These respects should all be impartially evaluated in the reading of an interpretation.

In Ren Min Gong Di, a recent Taiwanese production based on Ibsen's En folkefiende, the adaptor chose to insert "Storyteller" (an added character) to color the performance. In my thesis, I shall discuss why Storyteller is chosen in Ren Min Gong Di. Inspired by the strong tie with criticism shown in these previous interpretations of Ibsen's drama above, I place criticism and the way to express it as the prioritized concerns in my discussion of Ren Min Gong Di. Thus, I shall scrutinize how Storyteller, the most significant novelty contributed by the Taiwanese production, is disposed to utter the criticism upon which the Taiwanese artists try to touch.

As suggested in the cases of the Moscow Art Theatre and Théâtre de l'Œuvre, the criticism is virtually completed by the perceivers, which includes both the participants in theatre and the general public. In order to thoroughly comprehend the criticism rendered in theatrical productions, it is essential to read them concerning the social respects. Enlightened by the Taiwanese adaptor's authorial presentation explaining his motives of choosing Ibsen's En folkefiende, I shall study the affinities between Ibsen's play and the Taiwanese social context within which the production in question

was perceived.

After the social aspects, I shall study the cultural ones. I shall argue that Storyteller's configurations can actually be found in Chinese performing arts and that is why Storyteller can be sufficient in addressing criticism to a Chinese audience. To clarify my point, I shall review the "Storyteller-like" artifices found in the history of traditional Chinese performing arts and literature. I shall show that Storyteller may be a credit to the legacy of traditional Chinese performing arts, explaining its efficacy in the cultural context. Then I shall feature Storyteller's attributions in three aspects, its criticism, its hilarity, and its interaction with its surroundings. Then I shall compare them with the peculiar performativity noted by previous studies of Chinese performing arts.

In brief, the emphasized aim of my thesis is to show that the choice of Storyteller, which greatly resembles its predecessors in Chinese performing arts, is determined by the criticism of the production. I shall not assume that Storyteller is a direct descendent of traditional Chinese performing art, but the correlation between Storyteller and the Taiwanese culture should be not ignored.

Chapter II

From *En folkefiende* to *Ren Min Gong Di*

On the 23rd September 2005, Workshop In Heaven 黑門山上的劇團 produced *Ren Min Gong Di* 人民公敵 and had its premiere at The Metropolitan Hall 城市舞台 in Taipei as a brand new Chinese adaptation of Ibsen's *En folkefiende*. Joscha Chung 鍾欣志 directed the play and collaborated with Chung Xin-Yi 鍾欣怡 for the script in Chinese. The following year, this production was performed in Dhaka, Bangladesh, during the Ibsen Commemoration 2006.¹ Minor changes took places, including the shift of the actor playing Peter Stockmann (Wu 2007).

Ibsen's *En folkefiende* has customarily been categorized to be a realistic play, but the Taiwanese production proved its idiosyncrasy by presenting it in a meta-theatrical mode, which is carried out in a rather unrealistic style. The adaptor claims vernacular alteration is rarely necessary to evoke the audience's empathy and their ability to comprehend the crises rendered in Ibsen's original version (Lan 2006: 61). Indeed, the crises are clearly heard. However, the conveyance for them is not Ibsen's. Critical thoughts are uttered in the Taiwanese performance by a added character, which is amusing and doubtlessly vernacular—Storyteller 說書人. Great attention is easily drawn to this added role. Storyteller annotates and frames the performance. It gives inserted speeches, an additional intro, and a coda for the performance. Helping one act

¹ For the complete program, see the website of International Ibsen Conference and Theatre Festival, Dhaka Bangladesh 11-18 May 2006, http://www.catbd.org/ic2006/prog_schedule.html.

fade into another with its interludes, Storyteller cleverly slips into the stage to avoid breaking the flow of the performance. For most occasions, it directly addresses to the audience, giving both information and judgments with its perspective. Without being bounded in one single character, its omniscience makes itself a convenient tool to synchronize the drama presented and the perception of it by punctuating the immediacy for the audience. It combines jokes and austerity, verbalizing its inner concerns and thoughts in a frolicsome way with continuous pranks.

The adaptor credits the legacy from western theatre for his creation—Storyteller. However, with the respect of jokes, the perception, without doubt, must be completed in a vernacular context, be it social or linguistic. In addition, Storyteller, as *Shuo Shu Ren* in Chinese, refers to an old-time entertaining profession, the master of Chinese storytelling. Storyteller and the term's implication in Chinese may appear to be a coincidence, but Storyteller's inserted speeches do reflect many issues that are relevant to the Taiwanese social context. Therefore, even the director stresses that vernacular alteration is not needed, but, in fact, Ibsen's play is tuned vernacularly in the Taiwanese adaptation for its local critical concerns in various aspects. Among these aspects, Storyteller's criticism is certainly the most vociferous one and its criticism undergoes an expansion throughout the performance.

The adaptor's sociopolitical observation

In the light of the previous productions mentioned in the previous chapter, the reading of Chung's adaptation should be preceded by a general understanding of its social context. Joscha Chung considers that the drastically democratizing development and social changes during the recent years in Taiwan make En folkefiende the most adequate one among Ibsen's works to stage. In his view, En folkefiende responds to

the Taiwanese social context (Chung 2006: 39). Various issues being waged in politics and social aspects brought about Chung's determination to stage En folkefiende. Chung's choice is hardly surprising since the conspiracy between intriguing politicians and the mass media is vividly depicted in En folkefiende, conforming Chung's concerns.

In his authorial clarification, Chung makes his socio-political concerns clearly stated. Chung first recounts a series of rapid changes in the local mass media scene. As Chung describes, after Cable Television Law was introduced in 1993, the booming of local news-broadcasting TV channels has made the scene enter a new era. The aspects of the content have been broadened and what the "news" should be has been redefined. These changes have ultimately affected the Taiwanese public and their criticism of the events brought to focus by the media. While the number of TV news channels has been increasing, journalists from different TV channels are not necessarily encouraged to come up with unique views to report the repeated news stories. Hence, Chung shows his contempt for Taiwanese news agencies by criticizing how they unsuspectingly quote and represent the sources from foreign news agencies while editing clips of the events outside Taiwan (Chung 2006: 37). The "liberation of media", as Chung puts it, brings ironic and paradoxical consequences in Taiwan, especially in the TV news.

Furthermore, Chung includes Hao Long-Bin's 郝龍斌 resignation as the Minister of Environmental Protection Administration 環保署長. Hao's political combat certainly catches attention for its similarity with Dr. Stockmann's.² Hao's resignation resulted

² Hao Long-Bin is the son of Hao Bo-Cun 郝柏村, the former Premier 行政院長. Hao Bo-Cun's story

from a series of typical, meanwhile complex, debates of a nation that is still inexperienced in the practice of democracy. The very issue was whether the populism or the elitism should guide an administrative act. As Chung mentions, in the late 2003, during Hao's term as the minister, Hao rejected the demand from the local in Ping-Ling 坪林 about the accessibility for the general public to the Ping-Ling-Xing-Kong-Zhong-Xin-Exit 坪林行控中心專用道 on the National Highway No. 5 國道五號.³

This special exit was limited to the official use and Hao claimed that the public's routine usage of this exit may bring pollution to the neighboring Emerald Reservoir 翡翠水庫, which provides the Taipei metropolitans with tap water. A referendum in Ping-Ling took place after Hao's rejection and the majority favored the convenience by making this exit accessible. Hao then brought this issue to the Executive Yuan 行政院 at a national scope. In a discussion of the proposal to enact plebiscite, Hao

was rather typical for one of the soldiers who were serving in the army of the KMT (Kuo-Ming-Tang, 國民黨) during the Second World War. Originated from/born in Jiang-Su Province 江蘇省 in the central China, Hao Bo-Cun moved to Taiwan as well as most KMT soldiers did after the Communist Party defeated KMT in the Chinese civil war. After arrival in Taiwan, he continued his military vocation successfully and became the Minister of National Defense in 1989. During his term of the Premier, his earlier identity as a military general was strongly doubted and criticized by the liberalists who were against the military leaders to be in charge/to interfere national politics. Intensive attacks from the liberalists, mainly from Democratic Progressive Party 民進黨, resulted in his resignation in 1993. Hao Long-Bin, as the son of Hao Bo-Cun, represents this special community of the descendants from the families who were once powerful in the military or the political scene during the "Martial-Law-Period" (1949-1987, 戒嚴時期) in Taiwan. This community has become a new force among the politicians nowadays as the renewing generation, who are usually remarked as young, incorrupt, and morally sustained. Hao Long-Bin's success in the mayoral election/campaign in December 2006 is an exemplary of this community. Nominated by KMT, Hao Long-Bin won and has become the present mayor of Taipei City. (As the writer understands, Joscha Chung is also a son from one of those common veteran families that have been generously benefited by the welfare policy for military professionals in Taiwan. It is hardly surprising that Chung would easily favor or praise Hao Long-Bin's merit.)

³ Highway No. 5 is also named as Bei-Yi Freeway 北宜高速公路 or Jiang-Wei-Shuei Freeway 蔣渭水高速公路. All the three names have been commonly used.

suggested to the Premier that the administrative decisions, which had been approved by ecologist experts, should not be the subject to any referenda. Hao's suggestion was not considered. This special juncture made the Premier, You Xi-Kun 游錫堃, inevitably catered to the wishes of the locals in order to attract the votes for the imminent presidential election in 2004. You replied Hao with "Public opinion should not overtop expert, while expert opinion should also not overtop the public" (Chung 2006: 36). After the debate with the Premier, Hao resigned later the same day.

However, Hao's dignity in the story is open to debate. Taiwanese scholars and environmentalists have varied opinions about his demonstrative resignation. In her ethical defense for Hao's choice, Huang Li-Yun 黃莉芸 reviles the locals in Ping Ling for endangering Taipei citizenry's health. As Huang explains, the local in Ping Ling hoped the exit would make their town easier to reach, so Ping Ling, among a number of towns surrounding Taipei, may be appealing to the tourists, on which the future business potential of Ping Ling can depend after their dying tea industry had become much less profitable (Huang 2004: 75). Wu Dong-Jie 吳東傑, being quite objective in his criticism, explicitly shows his doubts that referendum in Taiwan could be practiced with the rational democracy, seeing no readiness in Taiwanese society to enact it. Wu clarifies that most Taiwanese voters do not have well-rounded comprehension of the complexity in environmental matters (2003: 68). Wu's sympathy seems to be directed towards Hao, but he points out that the committees, who were assigned to make the environmental impact assessment, were chosen through a dubious selective process (2003: 68). Yang Shi-Hui 楊士慧, an environmentalist and a member of the board of supervisors at Wild At Heart Legal

Defense Association 台灣野心足生態協會監事, lists a series of improper decisions in environmental policy, which Hao had supervised before his resignation. Claiming Hao has been neglectful, Yang remains skeptical about Hao's pronounced reason for his resignation (Yang 2005). Chen Can-Huang 陳燦煌, representing the alliance of organizations against nuclear power in Taiwan, expresses his dissatisfaction. Chen debases Hao's prioritization of the Environmental Impact Assessment reports. Chen clarifies that Hao's insistence is rather conditional by showing his ignorance on nuclear matters (Chen 2003). Thus, whether Hao's resignation is out of the concern for being consistent in the environmental policy he proposed remains doubtful in Chen's view. Hao voluntarily terminated his term as a minister, but he did not terminate his career as a politician. Hao, being a member of the opposition party, had a difficult time during his term as the minister to cooperate with others in the Cabinet. Thus, while losing the post, Hao undoubtedly gained his public image as a rigid hero, which was going to be a great reward for his mayoral campaign of Taipei in late 2006.

Coincidentally, the defense for water resources and the complexity shown in the political scene with which they are involved make Tomas Stockmann and Hao resemble one another extremely. Both are viewed as heroes sacrificed in the political combat. By mentioning Hao's uncompromising act against the authority, Chung makes Hao parallel with Stockmann.

While a considerably detailed account of the chaotic TV news broadcasting preceding Hao's story in Chung's personal statement, it is difficult to ignore Chung's endeavor to refer to the mass media and the contemporary politics in Taiwan by staging En folkefiende. Yet, Chung implicates his socio-political criticism in a rather indirect way,

while his political reflection is clearly expressed.

Taiwanese theatre, schools, and Chung's merit

Being rather original, Chung chose to place his criticizing utterance with a theatrical craft that is very different from Ibsen's realistic scenario. By virtue of Joscha Chung's modification, a new character, Storyteller, is added in the production of *Workshop In Heaven*. This insertion may be the most conspicuous effort in this Chinese-speaking adaptation. Nevertheless, the convention of self-conscious storyteller is neither unfamiliar nor unprecedented for theatergoers. To initiate the play with a prologue of sufficient information is a common task to both Chung's Storyteller and Tom in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. For uttering self-experiences, subjective observations and comments of other roles directly to spectators, Storyteller reminds the audience of Vivian Bearing in Margaret Edson's Pulitzer-awarded play, *Wit*. Chung's Storyteller basically functions as an annotator, reciting additional information throughout the performance. Attributed to the male performer who challenged this role, Storyteller carries a peculiar manner colored by a combination of sarcasm, self-ridicule, and "Cold Jokes."⁴ The performer of Storyteller successfully kept the audience giggling in a confusion of being unable to tell whether the zany incarnation was a part of the actor's true self or just an attempt to characterize the role. Intentional amusing was intensive at the scenes where Storyteller appears. Meanwhile, since Storyteller pronounces his vocation as an actor, he is also responsible for a part, Sang Ke Lang 桑克朗, as Aslaksen in the original version. Storyteller occasionally enters the drama as this role, involved with other characters.

⁴ Cold Jokes 冷笑話, in Chinese used in Taiwan, means the ineffectual joke that entertains no one but the one who makes it.

This formal change brings considerable impact on both the interpretation and the perception of the play. Chung claims that the idea is derived from the Stage Manager in Thornton Wilder's Our Town. At the first glance, these two characters seem to resemble, especially for the Taiwanese audience who witnessed the development of theatrical entertainment.

Godot Theatre Company 果陀劇場 acquaints the audience in Taiwan with Our Town after its first staging of the play since 1989.⁵ The company adapted Wilder's play into a localized version and renamed it as Little Town of Tansui 淡水小鎮.⁶ This adaptation becomes not only a feature of the company's repertoire for its commercial success, but also a legend in Taiwanese theatre history. Numerous spectators in Taiwan have witnessed this event by the company's four recurring productions.⁷ Godot Theatre Company produced Our Town while much fewer theatrical events were competing in the market of theatergoers in Taiwan. Gaining success at the early stage of the formation of cultural activities, Little Town of Tansui may be perceived as an icon among theatrical events after the retrieval of theatrical activities in Taiwan during 1980's.⁸ Its popularity certainly branded the company and endorsed the company's later productions. Preceded by Godot Theatre Company's successful Little Town of Tansui, Storyteller in Chung's staging of En folkefiende may make the

⁵ See Godot Theatre Company's official website, http://www.godot.org.tw/work_list/work_list.htm.

⁶ Tansui is a town on the northwest coast of the edge of Taipei City. It was once a well-developed and self-sustaining area, while being the main harbor for trading in northern Taiwan till the end of the 19th century. After Taiwan became a Japanese colony in 1895, most businesses relocated to the southern area in Taipei and the glamour of prosperity in Tansui withered. However, this town began to appeal to a lot of reminiscent intellectuals with its historic sites that construct an aura of the antiquated and refined manners. Artists in both pop culture and high arts have made numerous contributions to praise this town and its glorious past.

⁷ See also Godot Theatre Company's official website.

⁸ Theatrical entertainment became popular again among the younger generation after "the little theatre movement" beginning the 1980's. "Shiyanjuzhan" 實驗劇展 (festival of experimental theatre) at the National Theater in Taipei is commonly viewed as the initiation of the movement.

audience in Taiwan easily acknowledge the credit of Wilder's Our Town. Taiwanese audience may consider Chung's claim that Ren Min Gong Di adapts this formal convention from Wilder to be justifiable. In Ren Min Gong Di, fragmented sections of Storyteller punctuate the dramatic action of En folkefiende, as Stage Manager does in Our Town. Chung explicitly acknowledges Wilder's influence and the comparison easily makes the audience or the critics parallel Wilder's work and Chung's.

Wilder's works have been discussed as an extension of Brechtian practices.⁹ Therefore, the parallel between Chung's Storyteller and Wilder's Stage Manager consequentially makes critics to detect Brechtian influence in Storyteller. In many aspects, Storyteller does show its similarities with "alienation effect" proposed by Brecht. But, in order to carefully read Ren Min Gong Di's peculiar/particular invention in the cultural context, the examination of inspiration for Storyteller is not supposed to omit the relationship between the stagecraft and its locality.

Located in Taipei, Taiwan, Workshop in Heaven consists of a considerable number of graduates from theatre or performing arts schools in Taiwan, such as College of Performing Arts at National Taiwan University of Arts 國立台灣藝術大學表演藝術學院, College of Arts at Chinese Culture University 中國文化大學藝術學院, 戲劇學系, and College of Drama at Taipei National University of the Arts 國立台北藝術大學戲劇學院, 舊名為國立藝術學院戲劇系.¹⁰ Among them, the latter has been viewed as the more prominent one and the nucleus of Workshop In Heaven mostly

⁹ See Malcolm Goldstein's The Art of Thornton Wilder (1965) and Richard H. Goldstone's Thornton Wilder: An Intimate Portrait (1975) for detailed discussions.

¹⁰ For National Taiwan University of Arts, see www.tnua.edu.tw. For Chinese Culture University, see www.pccu.edu.tw. For Taipei National University of the Arts, see www.tnua.edu.tw.

consists of graduates from it. As involved in Ren Min Gong Di, the director, Joscha Chung, the performer playing Storyteller, Wu Shi-Wei 吳世偉, and the producer, Xie Nian-Zu 謝念祖 are all graduates of Taipei National University of Arts.

The curricula at all these theatre schools in Taiwan contain fundamental courses related to the traditional Chinese theatre. A great portion in these courses deals with the traditional opera performing disciplines for its dominant role in Chinese performing arts. Whether these courses are aimed at history, textual analysis, critical theory, styles in recitation, or movement training of the Chinese theatre, all of them facilitate students' familiarization with the performing codes of the traditional Chinese opera.

Storyteller's annotation-oriented speeches direct to the audience largely resembles with the expressive monologue commonly seen in the Chinese opera. The hypothesis may be questioned to be no more than conjecture. However, compared with the Brechtian studies, whose related publication was banned before the Martial-Law-Period in Taiwan for its advocate's close relationship with the Communist, it seems more reasonable to consider the stylish performativity of Storyteller is rendered by performing codes of the traditional Chinese opera, rather than the Brechtian approaches, which is mostly embraced by the pedantic theatre artists in Taiwan when they justify their obscure and intolerable performance. Brecht's merit is not well introduced until recent years. Contrast to the traditional European dramatists' reviling criticism incurred by Brecht's works for their entertaining style in performing, Brechtian theatre was rather a western and exotic curio only for the Taiwanese intelligentsia to fondle in the academy.

There are both strong evidence and Brecht's personal declaration that are showing Brecht's inspiration from the performance of the Chinese opera (Brecht 1964: 91-2), so Storyteller's performing style may be read as compound of the Brechtian theatre and the Chinese opera. Wilder also mentioned the Chinese theatre for its indicative physical gestures to complete the imaginative stage, which is a similar strategy he applies (Wilder 1985: xii). Since Wilder has spent his childhood partly in China, it was suggested that the traditional Chinese opera might have been also the inspiration for Wilder's imaginative stage.¹¹ However, Wilder has publicly denied this hypothesis. Wilder stated that he "never saw a play there" and he credited the influence from the Greeks and Shakespeare, the "world theatre," as he puts it. Wilder considers they "call for the same sort of imagination" (Coy 1992: 111). The similarity between the Chinese theatre and Wilder's work is seen largely in their indicated stages, instead of how characters in the drama express themselves. In my discussion, most attention is directed to the expressive mode employed by Storyteller to utter the criticism. Since Wilder had denied the influence from the Chinese theatre, the parallel of the legacies from Wilder and those from the Chinese theatre shall not be suggested in my discussion.

Thus, for the stylish language by which Storyteller's mockery is conveyed, the drama education that most members of Workshop In Heaven accomplished in Taiwan, and Storyteller's performativity possibly descended the Chinese theatre, I shall make efforts to re-examine the relationship between Storyteller in Ren Min Gong Di and the traditional Chinese performing arts.

¹¹ For his father's overseas job, Thornton Wilder lived in Hong Kong shortly in 1906. Again, in 1910, he moved to Shanghai from Berkeley, California and stayed there till 1912.

In his review of Ren Min Gong Di, Lan Chien-Hung 藍劍虹 emphasizes that Ibsen's original play means to reconstruct the quandary to tell the truth. In Lan's view, Ibsen creates En folkefiende neither for a self-defense nor for a release of his discontentment, but rather gives a representation of the dilemma when one is forced to handle a piece of truth (Lan 2006: 60). Inspired by Michel Foucault, Lan considers Ibsen's play to be an examination of the activity to tell the truth, instead of a simple certification of the truth (2006: 58-9, 63-4). Lan stresses the significance of the theatrical mode to present the essence of Ibsen's drama by Pierre Bourdieu's view of education. As Lan phrases it, "what makes education effective is its way to teach, rather than its content" (2006: 62).

Agreeing with the adaptor's view, Lan thinks the central issue in the drama is the art to tell the truth (2006: 61). To stress Ibsen's merit, Lan takes Taiwanese theatre performers of "the Little Theatre" 台灣小劇場¹² as an example, criticizing them for their ignorance of craftsmanship in theatre art by blatantly turning it to be a propagandist vehicle (2006: 60). To present such an emphasis, Lan suggests to reconfigure the mode in the theatrical presentation, so the mode may be relevantly intricate as how Ibsen renders the drama and impartially present the dilemma emerged from telling the truth. Therefore, Lan praises the adaptor's modification. Explained by Lan, Storyteller facilitates a perspective as a modern Taiwanese individual, thus, closer to its audience. With its alienated status from the drama, Storyteller points out

¹² Theatres in Taiwan underwent drastic change from 1980's to early 1990's. Generally, theatre experimentalists declares to be "The Little Theatre" to distinguish themselves from the commercial ones. Please refer The Little Theatre Movement In Taiwan: In Search of Alternative Aesthetics and Politics 台灣小劇場運動史—尋找另類美學與政治 by Chung Ming-De 鍾明德 for a detailed account.

that the event on stage is constructed. In Lan's view, Storyteller's purpose is to suggest the audience to take an objective view while being emotionally driven by the drama. Therefore, the concern in the drama, concluded by Lan, is shifted from "the truth" to "the way to transmit the truth." Lan approves Storyteller created by the adaptor for it sufficiently responds to the concern of Ibsen's play in his view.

From criticism to its conveyance

As concluded in the previous chapter, the inclination to involve criticism in the practice of En folkefiende is commonly seen. In this chapter, the resemblance in criticism between Ibsen's play and the Taiwanese actuality is clarified. Thus, the motive to criticize and the possible aspects being criticized are given in this chapter. By the virtues of Lan's review, the very task to stage En folkefiende in contemporary Taiwan is crystallized to be an open representation of "the art of telling truth," instead of asserting claims. Hence, the way to present criticism is to be the decisive factor in understanding the Taiwanese production.

Chung colors Ren Min Gong Di by adding Storyteller. Inspired by the critical tendency mentioned, I view Storyteller as "the vehicle" to place criticism in Ren Min Gong Di. In the performance, Storyteller often guides the audience's perception either of the characters or of the drama. Storyteller's guidance is often done by giving critical remarks. I shall discuss why such a convention is sufficient to serve this purpose for a Chinese speaking audience, concerning the adaptor and the audience's cultural background.

As I mentioned, the implication derived from the name of the added role (Storyteller) in Chinese, *Shuoshuren*, the master of Chinese storytelling, hints the kinship between

Storyteller and the performer of traditional Chinese storytelling. The affinity of Workshop In Heaven members' training involving traditional Chinese performing arts at different local theatre schools in Taiwan also catches my attention.

Therefore, for the sake of cultural comprehension, I shall search the legacy from the Chinese culture to identify Storyteller's merit in presenting criticism, explaining its efficacy in the cultural and historical context. With this respect, a great part of my clarification shall depend on the previous studies of the Chinese performing arts and Chinese fictions where Chinese storytelling has left prominent influence.

Thus, in the following chapter, the focus shall be on the production's peculiar way—Storyteller—to present its criticism and I shall argue that the traits in traditional Chinese performing arts largely elucidate the functions of Storyteller.

Chapter III

Storytelling in Chinese

Critical nature in the Chinese performing arts

Shuoshu 說書, the Chinese storytelling, has been one of the main genres in the traditional performing arts.¹³ Often, it is also noted for its inter-textuality with the Chinese literature, especially for its influence on the fiction and on the drama. Before the upheaval of *zaju* 雜劇, the incipient form of the traditional Chinese opera, *shuoshu* reached its summit and was prominent among various performances in the Song Dynasty 宋¹⁴ after a serial evolution. Flowering later, *zaju* surpassed *shuoshu* to be the main urban entertainment in the Yuan Dynasty 元 (Wu 1993: 213). Thus, the previously ultimate popularity of *shuoshu* is conceivable. The same group of urban audience transmitted from *shuoshu* to *zaju* suggests the continuity between the two species in the Chinese performing arts for serving their shared audience's custom.

With Hua Ben Xiao Shuo Gai Lun 話本小說概論, Hu Shi-Ying 胡士瑩 contributes

¹³ *Shuoshu* 說書 is also known as *pinghua* 評話/平話 or *shuohua* 說話. See Vibeke Børdahl's introduction of The Eternal Storyteller: Oral Literature in Modern China.

¹⁴ For the periods of Chinese dynasties, please refer the appendix I to see the descending of them.

a thorough study to the research of the idiosyncratic sub-genre of Chinese fiction, *huaben* fiction 話本小說, which is transformed from *shuoshu*. Popularity of *shuoshu* in the Song Dynasty is also certified by Hu. Though Hu traces back to the Zhou Dynasty 周, his detailed analysis of *shuoshu* begins with the performance in the Song Dynasty.

In Hu's view, the abundance of *shuoshu* performances in the Song Dynasty was unprecedented (Hu 1980: 43). Hu deduces that the growth of the urban economics and the domiciling concentration in the Song Dynasty facilitated the forming of popular entertainment. For the rising trading in the capital city, Lin-An 臨安, the abolishment of *fangshizhi* 坊市制 took place during the Southern Song Dynasty 南宋 approximately 1068 A.D. (Zhang 1984: 40). *Fangshizhi* used to set restrictions for trading hours and to locate the trading within bounded areas in Lin An. However, the booming of economic activities forced these restraints to be terminated. Subsequently, night markets appeared and businesses sprouted dispersedly in the city. Hence, *wazi* 瓦子¹⁵, the site where a cluster of public performances happened, was benefited by this liberalization and became more frequently seen. The audience at *wazi* consisted of imperial guards, craftsmen, tradesmen, and so on. In Hu's interpretation, these spectators from promiscuous groups share the same dissatisfaction against the ruling class (Hu 1980: 40-5). Performances were supposed to be offered as a relief from the laborious life. Consequently, social critiques might have been inserted occasionally during the performance as a method to affect and to comfort, pouring out the

¹⁵ *Wazi* 瓦子 is also known as *washe* 瓦舍, *washi* 瓦市, or *wasi* 瓦肆.

audience's suffering. For emotional alleviation, performers relied on the criticizing act.

Hu assembles three main characteristics of *shuoshu* in the Song Dynasty. One of them is *shuoshu* performers' unequivocal critique of the characters in the story. *Shuoshu* performers explicitly expressed their praise or antipathy. By doing so, they strengthened the affection of their performance. Meanwhile, they certified their perspectives of characters with these judgmental remarks. The audience mostly adapted the performers' perspectives. In Hu's view, *shuoshu* performers' guidance was virtually needed by the audience with the respect of the audience's poor literacy (Hu 1980: 85-6). Ever since, the ethic evaluation of characters has been essential in the performer's practice. Criticizing is unavoidable, but it should not be simplified to be only the expression of socially collective morality. Hu states that the earliest written segments of *shuihu* 水滸故事 (water margin)¹⁶ appeared in the Southern Song Dynasty. That 36 heroes depicted in *shuihu* raise riots against the delinquent and arbitrary governors was perceived metaphorically. *Shuihu* is conveyed with the lingering civilian discontent with the abusive emperors of the Song Dynasty (Hu 1980: 77-9). Performers ostensibly praise dauntless characters for their personal struggles, but the real implication was the revolutionary thoughts. The criticism was aimed at the politics, rather than the personal ethics.

Proposed by the performers, the comments on characters and the social critiques became the devices to alleviate citizens at such a totalitarian time. By applying either

¹⁶ *Shuihu* refers to the stories about the 108 heroes who are socially or politically oppressed and then gather together to raise riots against the authority. Stories were compiled in the Song Dynasty and became one of the earliest Chinese fictions in the colloquial language. It has been modified and rewritten at various dynasties.

of them, *shuoshu* performers recited this peculiar and traditional critical inclination. This critical nature is commonly found in both the scripts for traditional Chinese performance and the published literature. The satire fiction 諷刺小說, as one of the main species in the Chinese fiction in the Qing Dynasty 清, perfectly represents the descendant of critical nature in the Chinese literature. The other notable feature discussed above is that ethical scrutiny and political criticizing have been interwoven to the extent that it is almost impossible to distinguish them from one another.

In his examination, Hu, being a Chinese Maoist literary critic, remains skeptical about the criticism uttered by the *shuoshu* performers in the Song Dynasty. Hu states that urban prosperity in the Song Dynasty did not benefit his so-called proletariats in the rural China. Economic crisis in the villages were worsened by the drastically rising economics in the cities. Villagers' cultivated fields were deprived by the extension of enormous property owners resided in the cities. Lacking a centralized capital, modest manufacturers in the countryside failed to compete with urban ones that achieved the economy of scale. Population and prosperity in the cities grew continually at the cost of total demolishment of the rural economic entity. (Hu 1980: 38-40)

Thus, Hu doubts that the criticism delivered by *shuoshu* performers, who were compensated by the urban prosperity in the Song Dynasty, could virtually undermine the feudalistic ideals. The audience was indulged in the hope that justice would be realized by the heroic acts instead of ideologically social reformation. Hu depreciates this type of incomplete criticism, questioning its virtues of the critical being (Hu 1980: 78-80).

In addition, Hu argues that authors of *huaben* 話本 tended to remain loyal to the feudalistic ideals. *Huaben* means the script for *shuoshu* performances. *Shuihui* 書會, as the guild for authors of *huaben*, was mostly composed of the lettered that had failed to obtain a degree at *keju* 科舉, the civil examination in the ancient China (Hu 1980: 65). Hu criticizes the authors at *shuihui* for their earlier will to elevate socio-economic class with an academic achievement that is regulated by feudalistic ideology. In Hu's view, the criticism connoted in their works may only be abhorring, but not completely revolting to the feudalism, which is against his communist belief (Hu 1980: 76-7).

For the sake of a prudent analysis, Hu's materialistic deduction may be considered to be excessively focused on the class conflict and economic factors. Nevertheless, Hu's observation of the relationship between the urban economics and the emergence of popular entertainments in the Song Dynasty is echoed. Zhao Cong 趙聰, a Hong Kong scholar, also attributes the professional *shuoshu* artists' arrival in the Song Dynasty to the growth of urban wealth (1977: 107). The urban popular entertainment's prosperity in the Song Dynasty actually followed its appearance in the Tang Dynasty. The emergence of urban popular entertainment in the Tang Dynasty is also attributed to the awakening urban economics (Hu 1980: 14-5, Zhang 1984: 37-43).

With the growing trading centered at the city in the Tang Dynasty, popular entertainment is certainly offered with a range of choices. Among them, *sujiang* 俗講 in the Tang Dynasty 唐 is seen as the closest prototype from which *shuoshu* directly inherits the structural form (Hu 1980: 33-5). *Shuoshu* follows the routines in the

performance in *sujiang*. Both contain a prologue and a concluding finale in verse. However, the motives of *sujiang* are rather different from those of *shuoshu*. With the respect of contents, *sujiang* originated from Buddhist lectures, which interprets Buddhism classics in a conversational language. Catering the want of the audience, performers made *sujiang* less religious by involving more folklore or other sources as the contents (Hu 1980: 30-3). Even though the critical being of *sujiang* might not be as obvious or consciously driven as it is in the Chinese storytelling of other periods, *sujiang*, as to convey religious messages, may still be ideologically suggestive. The instructive being of *sujiang* is still conceivable. It certainly echoes the critical nature in other types of Chinese performing arts.

Though plebeian, *shuoshu* is not marginal. For its popularity, *shuoshu* was rather a mainstream among the street performances gathered at *wazi*.

As a matter of fact, the critical being rooted in Chinese literature and performing arts long before *shuoshu* in the Song Dynasty. Hu traces the literary record of storytelling back to the Han Dynasty. In Lie Nu Chuan 烈女傳¹⁷, Da Ren 大任 is appreciated for her prudence and virtue. Before she gave birth to King Wen of Zhou 周文王, Da Ren remained consistent in her principled behavior during the pregnancy. King Wen of Zhou was inherently talented. Hence, Da Ren is credited for her prenatal influence and also for her well upbringing. The proper behavioral pattern during the pregnancy is described as:

¹⁷ Lie Nu Chuan 烈女傳 was collected and edited by Liu Xiang 劉向 in the Han Dynasty. Da Ren's story was mentioned in the first volume, “母儀傳.”

...古者婦人妊子寢不側坐不邊立不蹕不食邪味割不正不食席不正不

坐目不視於邪色耳不聽於淫聲夜則令瞽誦詩道正事... (Liu 1973:

vol.1: 4-5)

In ancient times, a woman with child did not lie on her side as she slept; neither would she sit sidewise nor stand on one foot. She would not eat dishes having harmful flavors; if the food was cut awry, she would not eat it; if the mat was not placed straight, she would not sit on it. She did not let her eyes gaze on lewd sights nor let her ears listen to depraved sounds.

At night she ordered the blind musicians to chant poetry. (O'Hara 1981: 23)

In O'Hara's translation, *daozhengshi* 道正事 that comes after the singing of poems is omitted, but it is an important activity. *Gu* 瞽, the blind musician, speaks about (as *dao* in Chinese) *zhengshi* to pregnant ladies in the evening. In Hu's interpretation, *zhengshi* lectured by *gu* is the lecture about woman's virtue (Hu 1980: 2). As the storytelling was performed for a didactic purpose, the critical inclination might have been shown while justifying the socially approved virtues. Furthermore, before the storytelling, *gu* recited some poems (as *songshi* 誦詩 in Chinese). Hu considers that *gu*'s poetry reciting resembles the introductory verse sections found in the formula of *shuoshu* in later dynasties (Hu 1980: 2).

The critical being is also found in the entertaining performance in periods other than the Song Dynasty. Though the professionalism of *shuoshu* had not been completed until the Song Dynasty, Hu's research shows that storytelling was already included

within a variety of entertainments performed by *paiyou* 俳優¹⁸ before professional *shuoshu* performers in the Song Dynasty (Hu 1980: 3-8). *Paiyou* appeared much earlier than the Song Dynasty. They were the professional entertainers. Occasionally, they were employed at the royal residence. As noted by Hu, satirizing is the primary feature in *paiyou*'s performance. Juxtaposing a series of historic and exemplary performers of *paiyou*, Hu utters this argument by pointing out the satirizing act commonly seen in their performances.

Among these examples, You-Meng 優孟 was mentioned for his merits in satirizing with his vivid mimesis. You-Meng's witty performance is also uttered by other authors to certify satirizing to be the primary effort of the performance by *paiyou* (Zhang 1984: 10-11).

As recorded in by Sima Qian 司馬遷¹⁹, Sun Shu-Ao 孫叔敖 used to be the favorite minister under King Zhuang of Chu 楚莊王. Before his death, Sun told his son that You-Meng would be the person to turn to if help was needed. As predicted by his father, Sun's son reached You-Meng later for his predicaments. You-Meng was a professional entertaining artist in Chu 楚之樂人. He then disguised himself with the costume of Sun. A year after, You-Meng perfected his appearance by gradually embodying with Sun's manners and gestures. Subsequently, You-Meng made himself acquainted by King Zhuang under his disguise. King Zhuang was stunned at first by the surreal resurrection of Sun, then he proposed to You-Meng with the same post that

¹⁸ *Peiyou* 俳優 is also known as *youling* 優伶, *changyou* 倡優, or *youren* 優人.

¹⁹ *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand scribes) was accomplished during the Han Dynasty 漢 by Sima Qian 司馬遷. The record of You-Meng is found in Vol. 126, *gujiliechuan* 滑稽列傳 (collective biographies of humorists).

Sun used to have. You-Meng rejected the offer and mentioned the poverty that the son of Sun was suffering. Uttering to King Zhuang, You-Meng claimed that he would rather choose a vocation that would bring his offspring some insured fortune, since Sun's son could not avail himself of the devotion that Sun had made to the nation. King Zhuang was affected and understood the implication. He then entitled the descendants of Sun (Sima 1973: vol.126: 3-4). As being of the *paiyou* ancestry, You-Meng's account suggests the satirical characteristics might have been commonly seen in the performance by *paiyou*.

You-Meng's satire was performed for the sake of expressing political criticism indirectly.²⁰ The superiority of the satirist's perceiver may be the reason for the satirist to avoid provocative reviling. Yet, You-Meng's satirizing act can still be seen as an indication of the critical inclination shown in the Chinese entertainment in the early days. You-Meng's approach might be soothing, but its critical utterance was neither removed nor reduced. You-Meng's ultimate motive for his satirizing act is to ensure his criticism to be effective. You-Meng enlightens the disciples with his satire while showing the critical nature configured by him in Chinese performing arts.

The inclination to insert criticism in the Chinese performing arts might have been determined long before *shuoshu* in the Song Dynasty. Shown in the studies accumulated above, the affinity of the critical nature is repeatedly seen in numerous species of Chinese performing arts at different eras. This may suggest a continuity of a critical inclination that is obviously seen in *shuoshu*. As a legendary heritage of the

²⁰ A recent Korean epic film, *Wang-ui Namja* (The King and the Clown), depicts the satirizing performance in detail during the period when the Korean culture was dominated by the Chinese one. In the film, the performers were employed at the royal residence and they were forced by the ministers to present politically implicational dramas to the emperor.

ancient entertainment business in the Chinese culture, *shuoshu* still in practice in certain locations in China (Bender 1998: 330-1).

For You-Meng's jeering and the concealed hint in *shuihu*, the performers' subordinate status confronting the emperor may be the reason to make the criticism implicative, but the critical nature is yet detectable. The similar tendency to criticize is seen in *sujiang* and other Chinese storytelling activities. I am not to presume that Chung's Storyteller is a direct descendant of this continuity, but I would like to stress that that the cultural heritage is surrounding whenever an author activates such a convention as Storyteller in Chung's adaptation. Chung's strategic insertion of Storyteller should not be only a hazardous coincidence that follows the trend at the westernized theatre scene in Taiwan. The influence of the pre-existing storytelling performance should not be ignored. In fact, it is rather significant and suffusing.

Pre-existence of *shuohuaren* in the Fiction

Wang The-Wei 王德威 draws the attention to the phenomenon of how Chinese fiction authors commonly applied the *shuohua* 說話 traditions to render the narrative voice in their works. Wang argues that their narrative voice, which is transmuted from *shuohuaren* 說話人²¹, is a pre-existential convention prior to the creation of literary works. In his discussion, Wang exemplifies three Chinese fictions at different periods: Cao Xue-Qin's Hong Lou Meng 曹雪芹的紅樓夢, Liu E's Lao Can You Ji 劉鶚的老殘遊記, and Lao She's Lao Zhang De Zhe Xue 老舍的老張的哲學.²²

²¹ *Shuohuaren* is a.k.a. *shuoshuren* 說書人. Both refer to the performers of *shuoshu*.

²² Hong Lou Meng is translated literally as The Dream of the Red Chamber, Lao Can You Ji as The Travels of Lao Can, and Lao Zhang De Zhe Xue as The Philosophy of Lao Zhang.

Instead of viewing the narrative voices in these three Chinese fictions as peculiar individuals, Wang adapts Roland Barthes' words to explain that their Shuo Hua Ren virtually represents a series of collective ideas regarding to the era and the society. Wang focuses on how Chinese fiction authors depend on such a narrative voice to create the "verisimilitude" in their works. By employing a narrative voice in the mode of Shuo Hua Ren, the authors complete the "realistic motivation" in the fictions and strengthen the authenticity in order to affect their readers (Wang 1993: 119).

To clarify the pre-existence status of this stylish narrative voice in the Chinese fiction, Wang compares it with the narrators in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Boccaccio's Decameron. Wang explains that the "simulated context" is formed by an oral narrator in both Canterbury Tales and Decameron. With this respect, Chaucer and Boccaccio's narrators are similar with the Chinese one, but Wang points out a fundamental divergence between Chaucer and Boccaccio's narrators and the one in the Chinese fiction. Wang, adapting Barthes' concept again, argues that the Chinese narrative is composed of the collectively social conscious while the narrators in Canterbury Tales and Decameron are characterized as distinguished figures with their peculiar temperaments (Wang 1993: 123).

Wang proceeds with his elucidation of Lao-She's Lao Zhang De Zhe Xue. Wang brings forth the dissonance of the narrative in Lao Zhang De Zhe Xue. As Wang claims, the dissonance results from the author's attempt to carry out conflicting values by the same narrative.

In Lao Zhang De Zhe Xue, the narrative first jeers at the martyrs for their suffering

while the facetious protagonist, Lao Zhang, is not expectedly punished for his hideous conducts. Linking allusions of different philosophies, disciplines, or beliefs, the narrative strengthens the specious sophistry proposed by Lao Zhang. The narrative and Lao Zhang's mockery in the fiction ironically challenges the common belief in justice and retribution. By doing so, the narrative facilitates a cathartic fun, which is full of irony, addressing directly to the readers. Situated within the fictional dimension, readers may jeer at the martyrs along with the narrative and blithely enjoy the irony offered. They may presume their ridiculing in a fictional world does not violate their prudish values in the reality. (Wang 1993: 139)

But Lao She's social critique confronts readers' reaction rather complicatedly. The narrative turns the martyring torment into the hilarious catalyst to mock at and serves it as entertainment/amusement for readers. In Wang's view, by offering this type of mockery through the narrative, Lao She may intentionally criticize that most people tend to approve the conduct of Lao Zhang and discharge the condemnation of his twisted values, but Lao She may not be certain that his reflective critique is to be understood by his readers. Consequently, in the later chapters of Lao Zhang De Zhe Xue, Lao She makes the narrative voice shift its tone at times. The narrative also makes comments that follow the common, untwisted, and praised values in the society, contrasting with the boisterous irony it delivers at the beginning (Wang 1993: 139). As a result, the narrative's manners and gesture become inconsistent. The narrative, thus, is troubled by self-contradiction.

Wang argues that Lao She's reason to dispose the contrary values in the narrative is to challenge readers' sensibility to this subtle self-contradiction (1993: 137). Regarding the Chinese fiction, Wang suggests that most readers easily yield to the authority of

the narrative that is transformed from *shuohuaren*. *Shuohuaren* used to present the detached view and the independent commenter in their performance (1993: 138). Spectators tended to conform the perspectives certified by *shuohuaren* at the performance. Lao She makes the narrative in Lao Zhang De Zhe Xue reveal its self-contradiction. Readers are encouraged to re-examine the verisimilitude presented by this inconsistent narrative voice in the mode of *shuohuaren*. The authority of the narrative is questioned. The narrative in the Chinese fiction, thus, does no longer guarantee the continuity or the consistency as how *shuohuaren* used to be customarily expected. New interaction between readers and the fiction is enlightened. As explained by Wang, readers of Lao Zhang De Zhe Xue are encouraged to fathom the narrative's objectivity and authenticity that they used to take for granted (Wang 1993: 138). Readers may have to identify different perspectives to enhance their in-depth understanding of the fiction.

Wang states that his notion of the narrative in Lao She's work is to clarify how Lao She strengthens the tension in his fiction by retrieving *shuohuaren* as the narrative, but Wang's notion also reveals that *shuohuaren*, as a narrative convention, is often utilized in a reshaped/adjusted mode by the author. The altering is rather unrestricted in various aspects.

Expounded by Wang's notion, Lao She collages a diversity of perspectives into the single narrative voice in Lao Zhang De Zhe Xue while these perspectives are not correspondingly connected. Hence, the narrative fails to maintain logical continuity in its comments. As discussed earlier, this tendency/inconsistency shows that the narrative is not rendered with a consistent/logical disposition. Thus, it may be justifiable/defendable to conceive that the author's endeavor is not to contour a

distinguishable character out of this narrative.

Somehow, the narrative's indecisiveness may be viewed as a generalized depiction of the Chinese at the beginning of the 20th century. One may consider that the narrative's juxtaposing different disciplines and philosophies would be able to be interpreted as a portrait of a panic Chinese citizen being overwhelmed by the western thoughts that poured into the country within a very short period, such as American experimental psychology that is mentioned by the narrative in order to justify Lao Zhang's decision and inner thoughts in the Chapter 26. This type of interpretation is rather comfortably acceptable, because the fiction was created at a time while drastic changes were waging in the intellectual sphere and the wartime life in China under the influence of western scientific methodology, especially to a nowadays native Chinese reader.

Yet, it should be noted that the defense here for Lao Zhang with the western scientific doctrine is meant to ridicule Lao Zhang's indulging conceit. Here, the characterization of Lao Zhang is closer to how Lu Xun 鲁迅 disposes A Q 阿Q with self-deception.²³

It may not be appropriate to credit the application of western ideas as the author's attempt to characterize the narrative to be a worried patriot concerning the present issues in the Chinese social context in the decline of the empire. The aim that the narrative assumingly uses western ideas to comment Lao Zhang's conduct is to ridicule, not to represent the Chinese intellectuals' urge to introduce western knowledge to help the nation's predicament at that time. In brief, the western ideas are not proposed to render the narrative's personification.

²³ Lu Xu's *The True Story of A Q* depicts the zany protagonist, A Q, experience continual humiliation by his fellow townspeople, but A Q always comforts himself with unreasonable self-deception.

The narrative's capricious being and contradictory judgments in Lao Zhang De Zhe Xue make itself fall short to form an individualized character and this dissonance of the narrative confirms Wang's earlier argument that the undetermined (and generalized) being differentiates the narrative in Chinese fiction from the personalized narrators in the Western ones. The stylishly formulaic *shuohuaren* is applied under various modifications, adjusted to match the author's purpose. For the native Chinese readers, *shuohuaren*'s manners have been codified and generally understood. Whenever an author conjures *shuohuaren* in his work, what he/she does is to evoke a generalized and familiarized figure to serve as the ultimate narrative, rather than to innovate an original character with individualized perspective. Shuo Hua Ren is deeply inlaid in the perception of the Chinese, emerging whenever a similar device is activated.

In Wang's discussion, the narrative in *shuohuaren* mode anticipates to the creation of the fictions. Lao She's sophisticated altering of this quaint Chinese narrative voice certifies Wang's deduction that Chinese authors have been modifying the traditional heritage. Most importantly, *shuohuaren* precedes the creating process and has been customary to the Chinese cultural entity.

Critical traits of existent traditional Chinese storytelling

The pre-existential status of *shuohuaren* is identified by Wang's examination of its application in the Chinese fiction. In Chung's production, this convention returns to its origination, the theatre. At the performing site for traditional Chinese storytelling, scholars have made efforts to preserve this peculiar ancient entertainment by filing performances and the contents in their academic discussions. Their observation of traditionally Chinese storytelling may facilitate the understanding of Storyteller.

“Telling about the present and discussing the past, good words to enlighten the world”

談古論今醒世良言 is amplified as a reminder shown on a signboard hung at modern storytelling performing cites (Børdahl 1996: 24). By the act of discussing, the inscription suggests the unceasingly critical act in storytelling.

In his observation of Suzhou *tanci*, the storytelling performed now in the lower Yangzi delta, Mark Bender notes that “personal anecdotes, anecdotes of other people, legends, historical references, and so on” are all bestowed in *tanci* by “meta-narratives” (Bender 1998: 343). The information is given to zest the performance and to reason the performers’ remarks of the characters in the story. Found in the contemporary storytelling performance, it is part of the critical traits in the storytelling performance.

Implied political criticism is seen in the contemporary storytelling performance. Yang Zijiang, a Chinese performer for *pinghua* storytelling, was banned to perform. Unsurprisingly, the reason is political. His performance in which Emperor Qianlong was treated was considered to be full of criticism of the coeval politics (Bender 1998: 362). Unfortunately, the performance did attract a large number of audiences in Wuxi, including the authority. “Cultural bureaus at all levels” have been enacting the censorship from 1950’s, and “politics and sex” have been their prioritized targets (Bender 1998: 362).

Bender also finds the revelation of the role’s inner cogitation and the ways to reveal it greatly interesting (1998: 339). In the Chinese storytelling, there are not only informative annotations, but also explanatory notions for personal emotion and inner

conflict that are considered important for the audience's understanding of the story. Storytellers' insertion functions for a wide range of purposes.

Bender discusses *biao* 表 and *bai* 白, two different narration styles in the storytelling performance. With *bai*, performers present the characters in the story in conversations. With *biao*, performers become omniscient narrators to give "the thoughts of characters" and remarks that are "often interpretive and evaluative" (Bender 1998: 339). Bender notes the two different narration styles are effective for performers to intensify certain sections in the story. By rapidly switching between the two narration styles, performers can uncover the concealed intention of characters for the audience, so the audience can obtain the omniscience and concern for the characters that are not aware of others' deception in the story. While expressing in *bai*, performers speak as if they were the roles. Suddenly, they turn to *biao*, so that they can immediately comment or interpret the characters' words and inner thoughts as a way to reveal the deception. This special technique intensifies the audience's involvement and reaction.

The intensifying and immediate annotations result in different reactions from the Chinese audience. Vibeke Børdahl remembers that almost no one applauded after the performances she visited. She explains, "the audience express satisfaction with the performance exactly by the quick reaction in getting up the very second the story comes to an end" (Børdahl 1996: 29). Though Nikolai Speshnav's topic in his discussion, *quyi* 曲藝, is rather general, covering a great range of the Chinese "chant-recital literature" 說唱文學, but he also notices the Chinese audience's characteristics noted by Børdahl in other similar types of traditional Chinese performing arts. Immediate reaction by shouting out brief compliment or appraisal is

very common among the Chinese audience in all kinds of *quyi* performances as well as the audience of *xiqu* 戲曲, the traditional Chinese opera (Speshnav 1999: 91).

Another important trait noted by scholars is the comical feature in storytelling performances. Nikolai Speshnav distributes a part of his discussion in explaining the “humour” in *quyi* performance, and features the “humour” in storytelling. As Speshnav describes, the Chinese audience “lacks inertia of perception” (1999: 92). Speshnav aims to explain that the Chinese audience is not troubled by closely patched grave and comical section in the performance. He even stresses, “the Chinese are usually attracted by the entertaining comical performances” (Speshnav 1999: 91). Such an endeavor in comic characteristics has never been out of date. Vibeke Børdahl found the Chinese stanza in the decoration of a recently renovated performing site for storytelling, and translates as “Discussing the past and telling about the present, teaching to advice! Good words to enlighten the world, instruction infused in amusement” 論古談今誨人以規良言醒世寓教于樂 (Børdahl 1996: 27). The stanza reiterates the instructive stimulus that storytelling performers commit to arouse in the audience by a series of critical remarks. Stressing again the critical nature, it shows the necessity of comical sections in the performance. The essential combination of the comedian and the preacher in a storytelling performer is reminded here too. Again, the significance of these comical traits in storytelling should not be simplified to be only an effective theatrical craft for laughter. The perception of the “humour” in the storytelling is determined by both the social and the cultural context too. Speshnav gives an important explanation for stressing the significance of “humour” as below,

The national traits of wit and humour are especially important due to the

interrelation between the perception of comedy with peculiarities of the national psyche and national cultural traditions. We should also keep in mind that the perception of comic essence is conditioned by aesthetic models of behaviour with all the peculiarities of a particular nation (1999: 91).

Thus, the comprehension of comical parts in the performances largely depends on the spectator's full cultural integration. For a complete cultural observation, storytelling and its performer's comical characteristics should not be excluded in the discussion with regards of the cultural context.

Continuing critical traits

Tracing in the studies of Chinese performing arts and Wang's discussion of Shuo Hua Ren's transmutation in the fiction is not to assume that *shuoshuren* is the prototype when the adaptor created Storyteller. The identification of traits in *shuoshu* performance is to show that *shuoshuren*-like stagecraft is rather familiar for the Chinese cultural entity. For the familiarity, Storyteller can easily synchronize its audience's understanding of the messages it delivers. It is the method taken in Ren Min Gong Di to articulate and, more importantly, to expedite the comprehension of its criticism. With the observed traits in previous studies of the historic *shuoshuren*, I shall examine Storyteller's critical inclination in Ren Min Gong Di and its peculiar way to utter the criticism in the following chapter.

Chapter VI

Performing Storyteller

Inspired by the features noted in previous studies of traditional Chinese storytelling, I shall discuss Storyteller in three different expressive characteristics, the critical, the comedian, and the interactive. For Storyteller's sophisticated combination of the three characteristics, I shall center my discussion by featuring only his long monologues performed in Ren Min Gong Di in order to have detailed examination of its

compounded performing style. However, some shorter passages shall also be discussed.

Critical Storyteller

By quoting his teacher's aphorism, "the theatre ultimately matters for the civilization" 演劇之事影響文明甚大, Storyteller announces the task of the Chinese theatre. His teacher's recited expression may be viewed as the continuance of the Chinese philosophical saying, *wenyizaidao* 文以載道, declared by Han Yu 韓愈 in the Tang Dynasty. By *wenyizaidao*, Han Yu suggests that literature should be the vehicle to convey *dao*, which includes a series of beliefs in Confucianism presented in a rather didactic manner. Han Yu's belief renders the didactic inclination in the Chinese literature (Chen 1988: 16). Since theatre is one of the arenas where intellectuals' literary practices are performed, it is unavoidably influenced by the belief.

In Storyteller's aimless and casual chat, there are a lot of caricatured sketches. They seem to be Storyteller's comedian attempts, but virtually are placed in order to imply the criticism derived from the adaptor's observation of Taiwanese society. For example, in the intro, Storyteller explains that he cannot rely on his acting career to make a living and says:

我先做個自我介紹，我是一個演員。雖然平常的時候也會幫人家端端盤子，送送披薩，掃掃廁所，打打電話...什麼的。媽，我給人綁架啦，我出待誌啦...反正就是為了生活嘛，人家叫我做什麼我應該就是都會去做啦，因為我知道我的外在條件不是很好。

Let me introduce myself. I am an actor. Although I usually take jobs like carrying dishes, delivering pizza, cleaning toilets, making phone calls, etc. Mom, I'm kidnapped. I am in trouble...Anyway, for making a living, I think I would do most of the things that my employer ask me to, because I know I don't really have good looks.²⁴

With unstable income, Storyteller admits that his everyday life is occupied by varied temporary “jobs” for additional income. Despite his unwillingness, he conforms the order and does whatever he may be demanded. One of the “part time jobs” he names is “making phone calls.” Stressing on the last and unusual job, Storyteller alters his inflection while saying “Mom, I'm kidnapped. I am in trouble,” making the passage an imitation of the phone conversation with which the fraudsters commonly apply in Taiwan. Similar news stories have been repeatedly heard. After illegally gaining personal contact information, fraudsters and their assistants call randomly, pretending to be a “kidnapped” relative of the receiving end of the phone call and asking for a great amount of ransom for a non-existent kidnap. The conversation is performed in a caricature tone. Storyteller's imitation functions entertainingly as self-ridicule, but also plays as a piece of social criticism while such deceptive tricks are continuously reported one after another in the news. Among the texts delivered by Storyteller, Wu Shi-Wei, the performer of Storyteller, attributes most of the criticism regarding to the society or the media to be the Chung's merit (Wu 2007). The adaptor includes the societal reality in Storyteller's chat. It is easy to see the attempt to point out that immoral frauds becomes one of the way to make a living for the desperate in the contemporary Taiwan, which undergoes a rapid economic deterioration.

²⁴ In the rest of the chapter, all the quotations are from the performed text of Ren Min Gong Di and translations of them are mine.

Wu admits that he is responsible for most of the jokes in Storyteller's text. Therefore, Wu may be responsible for the choice to lay his comedian attempt on the last job among those he mentions. His choice of this bizarre job may not be random. As discussed, Wu's caricaturing sketch of the fraudster's trick carries Chung's criticism. The coincidence of Wu's attempt to joke and Chung's attempt to criticize ensures that Chung's criticism is expressed. Moreover, Wu's expressive style in which he performs Storyteller greatly stresses the criticism. In the performance, Chung's criticism often comes along with Wu's comedian attempts rather than emerges alone as didactic and dull lectures.

Before the phone conversation, Storyteller comments himself to be a less appealing actor for his inferior appearance. His comment seems to be self-pity, which again serves for self-ridicule, but it implies the criticism of the local entertainment industry. The attempt is to utter that trained actors and actresses are not popularly employed by film or TV productions in Taiwan. The market prefers untrained pop artists for their glossy looks. Actors are not valued for their proper training. Notably, the criticism is once again done under the disguise of Storyteller's comedian attempt.

After the public meeting in the fourth act, Storyteller walks towards the down stage. He first announces the end of meeting, and then gives a lengthy talk to criticize the public for their inability to discern the deception constructed by the media.

Concerning the hatred towards Shi Li-Ren 史理仁, as Tomas Stockmann, rapidly spread by the media, Storyteller also tries to reason the public's maltreatment on Shi Li-Ren with his ostensibly discursive deduction. Storyteller concludes:

市民大會就這樣結束了，過程和結果完全出乎醫生的意料之外，我們大概只能這樣說，媒體的力量實在是太大了，前一天侯夫塔才在報紙上刊登一篇支持市長的言論，後一天醫生就在他自己召開的市民大會上面，成了整個城鎮的人民公敵。根據我在排練場側面觀察的結果，媒體實在是太厲害了。可是，人為什麼就那麼容易受到影響呢？如果人不會那麼容易受到影響，那媒體也就沒那麼厲害了嘛，對不對？你不要看到什麼就相信什麼，你，你怎麼知道你看到的不是假象呢？你要檢驗一下嘛。像這個，這是什麼呢，這就是假象嘛。

The meeting of citizenry just ended like that. How it went and the result were completely out of the doc's expectation. We could only admit that the mass media are extremely powerful. Just a day ago, Hou Fu-Ta [the character as Hovstad] published an article with opinions supporting the mayor. The next day, the doc instantly became the public enemy of the whole town at the citizens' meeting he called for. According to my observation at the rehearsing site, the mass media is ruthlessly efficient. But, why are people so easily affected by them? If people were not easily affected, the mass media wouldn't be that efficient as they are, right? Don't just believe what you see. You..., how would you know that what you see is not just *jiaxiang* 假象 [deception]? You have to examine it. Like this, what is it? It is just a *jiaxiang*.

Storyteller turns to blame the weakness in "people" being "easily affected," but the criticism aimed at the mass media is not ignored. As storyteller assumes, the media

would not be so absolutely effective if “people” did not indiscriminately and unquestioningly adopt everything presented by them. Storyteller considers the weakness in “people” to be the main reason for the media to be so ultimate. Storyteller stresses the importance to discern the deception enforced by the media. Issues of “*jiaxiang*,” the deception, follow right after ignorant “people.” While lecturing, he underlines part of the criticism by making it visualized. His visualization seems to be a silly act, but virtually strengthens the criticism and engraves the topic of criticism into the audience’s memory by a visible picture. For example, a word play of *jiaxiang* can be literally translated as “fake elephant” and Storyteller follows its double meaning to post like one (I shall discuss it in detail later in the section of comedian Storyteller). The tension caused by his earlier accusation of “people,” which implies the present audience, can be soothed to a slight degree by this inserted comedian attempt.

Storyteller continues with the topic of deception and applies it to explain the essence of his *métier*—acting. He seizes the chance to question both what theatre is about and the concealed intention under disguise of all kinds of justification. Storyteller first explains his profession:

我是個做劇場的，我的專業，講得好聽一點就是在製造幻覺，講得直接一點就是在作假，假裝我很屌，假裝我很 high，假裝我很難過，假裝我是說書人，假裝這邊是一個舞台，假裝我正在跟觀眾講話，但是這一切很可能是都只是在發洩我的情緒而已嘛，對不對？唉，我這樣講好像你也就相信了喔，唉喲，不要聽到什麼就相信什麼嘛，對不

對？感情不要放太重，好不好？好啦，好啦，還是愛你的啦，好不好？

I am working at the theatre. To put it nicely, I make illusions. To put it directly, I just fake, faking I am *diao* 屌 [extremely capable of doing something], faking I feel high, faking I am sad, faking I am Storyteller, faking it's a stage here, faking I am talking to the audience. But, all it is seen here can possibly be just me giving vent to my discontent, agree? *Ai* 唉 [an exclamation in Chinese], you seem to believe again just because I express my opinion in this way? *Aiyao* 唉喲 [an exclamation in Chinese], don't just believe what you hear, agree? Don't take me too serious, okay? Okay, okay, I still love you, all right?

Expressing in a rhetoric manner, Storyteller assumes the theatre's task to be illusory completion. Defining it vulgarly, he describes it as "faking." Storyteller reminds the audience that everything in their present sight is part of the constructed illusion. Including visual and audible elements, and certainly the verbal expressions from performers, everything at the theatre is purposely done, placed, or presented. Hence, he reminds the audience of his earlier criticism of deception. His earlier criticizing utterance may sound righteous, but it may also be just his personal complaints or emotional disturbance twittered in the disguise of Storyteller. By doing so, Storyteller strengthens his earlier urging about putting serious efforts in discerning what the media presents. The importance of the necessary discernment of the media is shown by Storyteller's catchphrase, "don't just believe what you hear," which is a response what he says earlier, "Don't just believe what you see." Storyteller frequently reiterates this urging, showing again its significance. Here, Storyteller urges an

inspection of the narrative in the theatre, namely himself, but his implication is also generalized to cover all other types of media. As Lan suggests in his review of the performance, the adaptor attempts to form a “alienated” view with Brechtian approach, hindering the audience to be involved in the drama without discerning. Chung admits the influence from Wilder’s Our Town, which can be a proof to justify the production to be an extension of Brecht’s approach. However, Storyteller’s self-inspection of the narrative is closer to Wang’s examination of Lao She’s narrative mode. Wang claims the various and contradictory perspectives in the narrative of Lao She’s fiction evoke the reader’s doubt. Then the readers would reconsider the objectivity suggested by the narrative. Storyteller and Lao She’s narrative in fiction facilitate to bring the same question out. Both Chung and Lao She endeavor to encourage their readers/audiences to examine the objectivity, which is customarily implied by rendering the narrative in the traditional Chinese storytelling mode.

But it should be noted that Chung’s purpose here is to justify his criticism of the media. In the performance, Storyteller’s inspection reveals that his and the media’s ostensible objectivity may possibly be intervened by many factors. Storyteller’s attempt seems to be presenting different views and to value them impartially by discerning the real intention behind each argument. Storyteller seems to urge the audience to examine and to discern, but, as a matter of fact, the adaptor still subjectively inserts his view of the mass media into Storyteller. Since Storyteller proceeds with attacking the media, conforming to the adaptor’s will, he does not virtually leave his objectivity to be questioned by the spectators. Indication to the authorial authority is seen in the stage direction. Wu symbolically transfers from Sang-Ke-Lang, as Aslaksen, to be Storyteller by leaving Sang-Ke-Lang’s hat, on a hook at the center stage. Afterwards, while justifying the criticism, Wu makes

Storyteller approach the writing table, indicating his utterances carries perspective of the author of the production (I shall discuss at the end of this section for critical Storyteller). Perspectives are sophisticatedly layered in this critical section. At the end of this section, for regulating his own performing style, Storyteller inserts another teasing joke after his in-depth discussion by stating, “I still love you” to comfort the audience.

Turning the subject to “democracy,” Storyteller presumes

我常常覺得很奇怪哦，所謂的民主，就是大家都有發表意見的權利。但是這個社會好像越民主也就越混亂。所以我的想法就是大家最好就少有意見。對！我的想法就是大家根本就不要有意見。嗯，嘖，唉，可是我這樣好像隨隨便便也就講了一個意見了喔。你可能不會同意我的說法，你可能會說，民主就是要有這論自由，對啦，學校是這樣教的啦，可是學校這樣教你就要相信嗎？哪一個媒體不需要生存？你要討好觀眾你才会有收視率，你有收視率廣告才賣得出去嘛。所以你只要營業，你一定要討好公權力。所以言論自由這個東西，基本上就是一個幌子，沒有一個媒體是自由的。

Quite often, I find this belief odd. The so-called definition of democracy is that everyone has rights to utter their personal opinions. But the society seems to be more chaotic while it's getting more democratic. Therefore, my suggestion is that the personal opinions should be lessened as much as possible. Yap! My suggestion is that uttering personal opinions should

be completely banned. *En...ze...ai...* [all as exclamations in Chinese], but it seems like that I just expressed another opinion by my scribbling talk here. You might not agree with my opinion. You might say the democracy depends on the freedom of speech. Yeah right, it is taught so in schools, but are you going to believe just because you were taught so? Which public mass medium doesn't need to strive for survival? You have to please the audience to heighten the audience rating. You can sell the commercial time only when the audience rating keeps high. You want to run the business, and then you have to toady the public authorities. So, the freedom of speech? It is just window dressing. None of the mass media is free.

In this passage, Storyteller brings a paradoxical solution for “chaotic” society resulted from the practice of “democracy,” in his view. He proposes to “ban” all utterances of individual judgments. Here, the criticism of some politicians abusing the true democracy in the name of the public's interest is enlightened. Storyteller tears a strip off the mass media by pointing out their detachedness, which they always defend with “the freedom of speech,” is virtually under the influence of varied factors, mostly for business profit. Storyteller concludes that no public mass medium is completely free from any restraints, when it has to deal with profits and “authorities.” Uninterrupted “freedom of speech” is not guaranteed in the practice of the mass media.

Before directing his criticism to the media, Storyteller makes a sub-critique aiming at the indiscriminate audience, but Storyteller reproaches the public education this time. Questioning the audience, Storyteller shows his suspicion that school education may regulate the pupils' mentality by asserting certain customary thoughts. Storyteller

hints that the myth about “the freedom of speech” is imposed by school education and he asks the audience if they agree to simply believe that without any critical views. His criticism here travels from “democracy” and “the freedom of speech” to the media’s craftiness, by crossing over the school education.

To conclude his criticism, Storyteller draws attention back to the characters and says,

所以我覺得醫生這個人根本就是一個笨蛋，他完全不曉得按照這個世界的遊戲規則來運作，他的哥哥就屌，他哥哥屌了，難怪可以當市長。

Therefore, I think the doc is just an idiot. He doesn’t know how to play with the rules in the real world. But, indeed, his brother is *diao*. No wonder he can be the mayor.

In this long monologue, Storyteller cunningly fools around his subjects. However, the criticism aimed at the mass media is not ignored. In this longest passage Storyteller contributes in the entire performance, his criticism covers a range of different topics. He shifts the topics from social one to political ones, and then concludes them in the comments on the character, showing the resemblance with the traditional storytelling master whose criticism carries implication concerning and interweaving between different aspects.

With respect of character comments, Storyteller distributes a great part of the criticism in the drama for that. Since the adaptor has also referred to Miller’s adaptation for his own (Ren Min Gong Di 2005), Storyteller’s sketches of characters may commonly be viewed as a legacy from Miller. The critic has attributed the account to feature

characters with short introduction to be Miller's merit. However, if Storyteller's sketches are examined in detail, the divergence between those in Miller's adaptation and those by Storyteller is easily seen. With his reasoning for the characters, Storyteller risks less than Miller in making them caricatured. Two characters, Shi Li-De 史理德 and Hou Fu-Ta 侯夫塔, as Peter Stockmann and Hovstad in Chung's production, are introduced in this featuring mode. Introductions of them are, again, combined with Storyteller's comedian attempts, but Storyteller's comedian attempts do not tend to make fun of them or to stereotype them as how the Miller's method may result. Contrast to that, Storyteller makes detailed account of characters' background and upbringing in order to reason the character's motivation and later conducts.

The first one who is introduced by Storyteller with such a sketch is the mayor, Shi Li-De. Storyteller first makes a comedian attempt and then proceeds with a detailed account of Shi Li-De. As informed by Storyteller, Shi Li-De has been an ambitious politician over twenty years and eventually gains the most powerful position in town, the mayor. But Storyteller's tone is not all that applaudive. Storyteller verbalizes Shi Li-De's devotion to his vocation with "*hun*" 混 and "*dagun*" 打滾 in Chinese. *Hun* is commonly used in Taiwan for gangsters' involvement with criminal conducts while *dagun* describes a venturesome person who must scramble and jostle to reach the goal in the profession chosen. Both the two terms describing Shi Li-De indicate that his political career is not always honorable. Storyteller mentions the unavoidable forfeit Shi Li-De has to pay as a politician. For ensuring his political power, Shi Li-De has turned some of his fellow natives to be his rivals. According to Storyteller, Old Qi 齊

老先生, as Morten Kiil in the production, is one of them. Storyteller asserts that Shi Li-De is rather “conservative and rigid” 為人嚴肅個性保守. He assumes that Shi Li-De has “difficulty in sharing personal feeling with others” 很難和別人分享心事. Described by Storyteller, “Shi Li-De fears to disclose what he feels deeply inside and speaks in a manner as if he was writing a official document” 說起話來好像在寫公文一樣而且很害怕去挖掘自己的內心世界.

Hou Fu-Ta is the second to be introduced. Storyteller informs about his present job and social status. Storyteller considers Hou Fu-Ta to be, in the view of the townspeople, one of the intellectuals for his political disinclination and journalistic profession. Coming from a farming family, Hou Fu-Ta’s elite social rank is credited for his distinguished intellect. For his ancestry (raised in a such a family), Hou Fu-Ta tends to identify with the oppressed civil citizen and disrelish the prestigious class, such as Shi Li-De. But Storyteller does not ignore Hou Fu-Ta’s ambivalence towards the prestigious, stating Hou Fu-Ta’s desire to be one of them. Storyteller begins the introduction of Hou Fu-Ta with “he is here for dinner as well as his gluttonous colleague.” Storyteller’s introduction of the character seems to be presented impartially.

Storyteller occasionally scatters brief character comments. As he introduces Shi Li-Ren, as Tomas Stockmann, and Kai-Lin, Storyteller tells the audience that the couple “frequently makes dinner treats for various guests” 常常招待一些人來家裡吃飯, indicating their profuse life style. Explaining how the business of sanatoria with springs begins, Storyteller says,

市長運用他的領導才能，還有一些職務上面的方便，哼，人嘛，總之他就開始組織委員會，開始募款，投資，做一些溫泉療養院的生意。

With the convenience derived from his post...the unavoidable human weakness, the mayor starts to organize the committees, to raise the funds, and to distribute the investments for the business of sanatoria with the spring.

Storyteller clearly states that Shi Li-De makes great capital out of his mayoral post for legalizing and initiating the enterprise. Signing for his helplessness in his expression, Storyteller assumes Shi Li-De's conduct to be ineluctably "human" fault.

For the doubtless support for her father from Pei-Pei 佩佩, as Petra in the production, Storyteller praises her as a girl "with guts" 帶種 and "vigorous" 多帶勁兒. In his approval, Storyteller's inflection also implies Pei-Pei's sexual appeal for him. Back to his criticism of the media discussed above, Storyteller condemns Shi Li-Ren to be an "idiot" 笨蛋 for his naivety and immaturity in the world with intricacy operated by the media after his conclusion. Contrast to his brother, Shi Li-Ren, Storyteller states Shi Li-De is much shrewder.

Storyteller makes a coda after the fifth act. He tells the audience Ibsen does not present the aftermath for Shi Li-Ren and his family or for the town, but he thinks any of that would be unnecessary. Storyteller considers the most significant reflection derived from the evening's event to be "the readiness to perform one's own role" 你有

沒有準備好你要扮演的角色。Storyteller's words are literally an advice for his colleagues and co-actors on stage, but they are also uttered to be a general reminder for the audience of their social roles and obligations. Storyteller then continues to thank the audience's participation, which enables the company to play on stage for the evening. Storyteller reminds the audience of his financial predicament and reaffirms that he will resume the jobs that he mentions in the intro if the theatre lacks steadily financial support by the public through box office. The utterance appears to be a solicitation, but it implies the societal ignorance of the theatre.

These pieces are conveyed with the adaptor's criticism in various aspect of his observation of society. In the intro, Storyteller has declared that the play is written by Ibsen. The merit of creating the play has been attributed to Ibsen and Storyteller admits that he is not the author of the play. Therefore, the scene where Storyteller sits at the writing table may not imply that Ibsen's perspective shall be given through Storyteller. However, the beginning scene before Storyteller's intro suggests that an authorial perspective is going to be given. Since Ibsen has been excluded from the present scene in Storyteller's revelation, the most possible "author" that Storyteller may occasionally represent should be the adaptor. The adaptor's varied criticism in different topics makes Storyteller closer to the feature noted in Wang's argument. Storyteller is actually a conveyance of the collective social conscience, reciting certain customary values.

Comedian Storyteller

Storyteller reveals his comedian attempts from the very beginning of the performance. He announces his profession to be "an actor" in the intro of the performance, and then

he articulates his perception of the vocation. In Storyteller's view, the actor is categorized as part of "service industry" 服務業. Storyteller empirically deduces his conclusion. He explains:

畢業之後，我到社會去工作，我發現我的工作在這個多元的社會裡面，應該算是一種服務業。服務業的邏輯其實很簡單，就是要讓人家爽嘛。我讓老闆爽，我就有 case 接，我讓大家爽，我就有錢賺。如果我讓觀眾爽的話，我就會有掌聲哦。謝謝...

After my graduation, I start to work in the real world. I found out that my job should be a type of service industry in this pluralistic or multi-dimensional or multi-faceted society. The essence of service industry is actually rather simple. The aim is to please others. If I please my patrons, I will get the case. If I please everyone, I will make a fortune. If I please the audience, I shall expect some applause. Thank you...

After the explanation, he poses his hand next to the ear as if he was trying to listen. The audience, in the recording, perfectly understands his indication and responds with clapping. Storyteller sees the priority of service industry to be to please the clients or the patrons. In the performing evening, his patrons should be the audience. Therefore, Storyteller's goal to please and to cheer the audience becomes explicit. He then gives the catchphrase, "all for one and one for all" 我為人人人人為我, found in the Chinese translation of Alexandre Dumas's The Three Musketeers (1844). Storyteller turns the phrase to be a quibble to stress the inter-dependence between customers and service provider in the industry. Storyteller concludes his philosophy by proclaiming

“to live a life to please others” 活得要讓別人爽。

Storyteller also applies others' judgments of actors. He shifts to a different tone, imitating a criticizing person who condemns theatre performers for “*maixiao*” 賣笑, selling smiles as liberally translated. “*Maixiao*” is a Chinese expression that describes the act to be a prostitute. Interestingly, in the ancient China, Chinese prostitutes also commonly performed at the bordello some shortened or selected theatrical acts, which was sometimes considered to be part of their requisite skills. The actors are reviled by this usage, which connotes a denial by paralleling acting with sexual service. Being annoyed, Storyteller defends, but fails. Storyteller stresses “We are very seriously...” 我們是非常認真的, repeating it for three times, but he eventually ends up with admitting that actors' practice is virtually “selling smiles,” agreeing with the criticism.

This short passage in the intro assumes the very task of Storyteller in the performance, namely his comedian attempt. Even though Storyteller expresses his self-doubts occasionally, concerning his teacher's exhortation, “the theatre ultimately matters for the civilization,” but a clear statement of an actor's entertaining function is expressed. The passage is also a piece of Storyteller's self-ridicule. Here, Storyteller addresses to the audience as an actor without disguise served to present any roles, so the audience may easily assume that the views and experiences shared by Storyteller are based on the actor's actual and personal life. Storyteller artfully blurs the distinction between the role, Storyteller, and the actor's true self. The indistinctness results in the great success of all the Storyteller's self-ridiculing attempts following in the performance. Hilarity in these parts is certain by Storyteller's pseudo-self-exposition. Thus, the audience's blithe enjoyment can be largely derived from the self-ridiculing parts

because the constructed actor's self makes the audience believe these parts are realistically quoted from the actor's real life. As seen later in the performance, self-ridiculing becomes the major inclination in Storyteller's comedian attempts.

Storyteller's strategy here, which tries to blur the distinction between the role and him, greatly resembles the tricks of the performers in the traditional storytelling. Both Storyteller and performers of *shuoshu* imply assertions that they claim to be personal, but they may intentionally insert these assertions in the performance for certain statement or effect they want to achieve.

The feature is seen in many attempts later. For example, when Shi Li-De appears on stage for the first time to visit his brother's family in the first act, Storyteller enters the stage and freezes the drama. Storyteller informs us about the producer's promoting bonus, which is a demand on him to perform the "motionless picture" 靜止畫面 effect in theatre. Storyteller adds that he will do "reward" and "forward" effects as what a videotape player can do if the box office goes well to the extent that ninety percent of the tickets are sold, which is also an order from the producer. Storyteller urges the audience to spread the news so that the number of audience will increase in upcoming performances. After Storyteller's informing, the actor that plays Shi Li-De breaks the stillness and walks towards Storyteller. The actor of Shi Li-De interrupts Storyteller's speech by pickling on him with his walking stick. He uses the Taiwanese dialect, saying "*mela*" 沒啦, meaning "no such a thing," to withdraw Storyteller's false information. Thus, it is clear the passage here is given by Storyteller with the purpose to entertain the audience. As a piece of affirmation for Storyteller's characteristics, the restraint from the actor of Shi Li-De makes the passage

characterize Storyteller to be a mischievous fun-chaser. By mentioning that the producer demands him to do so, Storyteller reaffirms the audience's assumption that Storyteller addresses as the actor's true self, instead of a role. This narrative strategy turns the performance in a meta-theatrical mode, crossing again the boundary between his true self and the character as Storyteller.

The other trait showing that Wu Shi-Wei attempts to blur the distinction between the role and his true self is his usual saying, "according to my observation at the rehearsing site" 根據我在排練場的側面觀察的結果. When Storyteller addresses with it, he actually implies that he is addressing by the voice as the actor's true self with his real life experiences. It certainly strengthens the confusion of whether Storyteller reveals his personal experience or it is part of the disguise of the role constructed.

The most hilarious comedian attempt by Storyteller is largely attributed to this equivocation. In his introduction of Hou Fu-Ta in the first act, he states that Hou Fu-Ta dislike the prestigious, or the rich in town. To emphasize Hou Fu-Ta's dislike, Storyteller comes towards Shi Li-De and continues "for example, the mayor, who evokes the indescribable dislike" 比方說市長，就有一種莫名的厭惡. While Storyteller utters "the mayor", he approaches Shi Li-De on stage. Storyteller comes extremely close to Shi Li-De that their faces almost run into each other and he pauses this position for seconds while other characters are forced to be still during his inserted character annotation. The physical play here is supposed to be a comedian attempt, but Storyteller understands that no one senses any hilarity in it after doing it twice. Storyteller shows frustration and says "not funny," The actor who plays Shi

Li-De, breaking again the stillness, immediately responds with “*jiayou*” 加油, an expression in Chinese meant to pep up someone in a dispirited mood. That the audience sees Storyteller being encouraged by another character on stage to effect his comedian attempt, hints that pitiable Storyteller actually often ridicules himself by his failed comedian attempts. Based on the confusion between the true self of the actor and the role, the audience’s blitheness emerges in the pity for Storyteller or the actor. According to the reaction by the audience in the recording, the pathetic characterization of Storyteller shown here achieves the most intensive hilarity in the entire performance.

Storyteller makes some of his comedian attempts in wordplays. When Storyteller introduces Shi Li-De, he describes him as “*tieban* 鐵板 Man” for his stubbornness in the long political battle. “*tieban* Man” meant to connote its assonance with the expression, “*tiebanmian*” 鐵板麵, which is a common dish at most of westernized breakfast places in Taiwan. It is a dish with noodles that is stir-fried on a heated iron plate. “*Tie*,” in its double meaning in mandarin, also gives the clues about the stubbornness of the character, while another expression, “*tikey*” 鐵齒, in Taiwanese dialect also refers to characteristics, such as inflexibility and obstinacy.

Tieban Man and *tiebanmian*’s assonance is shown by Storyteller’s intentionally altered inflection under the influence of the Taiwanese dialect that is transformed from *holo* 河洛 dialect. *Mian*’s pronunciation in mandarin is altered by Storyteller to be “*man*” for Storyteller imitates the accent of the native of *holo* dialect. The attempt is to make fun by applying a biased dialect to describe an government official and the

actor who plays Shi Li-De does the same when he says “*mela*” 沒啦 to interrupt Storyteller.

Another wordplay appears when Storyteller asserts his conclusion at the end of the second act. After the fight between Shi Li-Ren and Shi Li-De, Storyteller recalls his childhood memory. Storyteller tells the audience that he “had a scientific experiment that he poured water and oil into a glass.” According to Storyteller’s memory, “*you* [the oil] and *shui* [the water] could not be dissolved into one mixture. They were clearly separated into two layers lying in the glass.” Inspired by this scientific observation, the Storyteller suggests to describe it with a Chinese idiom, “*youshuiburong*” 油水不容, and he argues the idiom has been an common usage. In fact, “*youshuiburong*” is a parody of another Chinese idiom, “*shuihuoburong*” 水火不容, which aims to express a extreme polarity between *shui*, the water, and *huo*, the fire, to connote the incredulity to combine or to reconcile two opposite qualities or individuals together. In addition, the resolution that Storyteller shows by insisting his false and unrecognized usage’s authenticity emphasizes once more the mischievous and fatheaded characteristics in Storyteller. But the altered Chinese usage, which seems to be silly, enhances Storyteller’s endeavor to metaphorically present his view to divide the characters in two groups of opposite ethical principles. Audience gains clearer picture of interpreter’s intentions and views. The abstraction of the personal conflict is vividly depicted.

Wordplays are found in other forms. In the intro, before shifting to the drama, Storyteller makes a physical display of the Chinese characters used for the title of the

performance. Ren Min Gong Di is transformed by Storyteller to be four gestures to indicate the four Chinese characters in the title. *Ren* 人 is presented by that Storyteller sticks his arms on each side of his trunk with opening legs to show a similar form of the Chinese character. For *Min* 民, Storyteller parallels his arms, one over the head and one stretching out at the side of his trunk, with both hands pointing to the same direction. He crouches down again, making his legs showing the form of “h.” *Gong* 公 is done in a similar way. Storyteller crouches down with sliding the knees to opposite sides and slightly lifts his arms on the sides to visualize the written character. *Di* 笛 is done by a phonic indication. Storyteller imitates the carriage of playing the flute. In Chinese, the character of flute is also pronounced as *di* 笛.

Before his physical display of the production’s title, Storyteller announces the event to be a precious opportunity for him, as one of the insignificant and jejune actors on stage, to practice with a masterwork and, hopefully, to realize the expectation shown in his teacher’s repeated expectation, carrying out the theatre’s social significance. Storyteller’s missionary message is immediately ridiculed by the following play with words. Storyteller repeats the two last Chinese characters in his teacher’s exhortation, “*shenda*” 甚大, meaning very big while acting as if he was lifting up something heavy. He suddenly breaks into a screaming while doing so, indicating in his body movement that he drops the thing he is trying to raise. This physical gesture is meant to symbolize Storyteller’s failure to match his teacher’s expectation, but it is also a self-ridiculing attempt to stress the pitiable characteristics and insignificance of Storyteller. This part, while reiterating the didactic inclination in Chinese arts or literary works, is perceived to be a comedian attempt. Thus, the drama, once expected

to be presented in a solemn manner a few minutes before, is commenced in the performance in a facetious way.

The wordplay by physical displaying continues. Turning written Chinese characters into visible signs on stage by physical gestures seems to become an effective way preferred by Storyteller and the jocularity is certain. The other similar wordplay is seen after the fourth act. Following the debate between the public and Shi Li-Ren, Storyteller addresses his lengthy comment on the mass media discussed above. Concluding his criticism, Storyteller suggests the audience to carefully examine the mass media and their production to avoid being misled by the “deception” constructed by them. Here, Storyteller terms the “deception” as “*jiaxiang*” 假象 in Chinese. “*Xiang*” in Chinese, refers both to the appearance and to the elephant. “*Jia*” can be literally understood as fake. Storyteller then tries to make an imitation of the elephant by featuring its nose. Storyteller places one of his arms pulling out from his nose and poses it for some seconds. Hence, Storyteller explains to the audience that his posture is a “fake elephant,” using the two expressions’ assonance for coloring his critical utterance. Notably, Storyteller’s solemn criticism precedes this fun-making attempt. By the virtue of combining the two types of narration out of different purposes, the hilarity here affects the audience at a much higher degree. The contrast shown between the serious critique and the following joke also relieves the audience from a didactic lecture, but it does not reduce the significance of the earlier criticism. By this joking attempt, Storyteller’s slogans or catchphrases are emphasized by a visual picture. The visualization may ensure the audience’s remembrance and reflection to include those criticized issues in the performance.

The wordplay is applied again after the “fake elephant.” Storyteller continues his long talk full of censure about the mass media for its hidden conspiracy behind the disguise as the herald in the society, but Storyteller turn the media’s craftiness to feature Shi Li-De’s appreciable characteristics. Storyteller describes Shi Li-De to be “*diao*” 屌 in dealing with media. Storyteller reinforces his description with saying “He is not just *diao*. He is doubly *diao*. Let’s just call him *diaodiaodiao*.” In Chinese, “屌” is a rather strong term, meaning ultimately capable of performing something, but it also has a double meaning, referring to another symbol of strength, the male genital organ. Storyteller plays with the double meaning of the word. Storyteller proceeds with assuring the audience that he is “an expert in *diao*,” swinging the lower part of his body to release a sexual message. While Storyteller is making his obscene narration, his teacher’s word, “*shenda*” meaning rather big, is amplified by the loudspeaker in the theatre. The coincidence of the teacher’s exhortation and Storyteller’s bawdy joke shows a disrespectful remark of his teacher’s reminding. Stunned by the sudden retrieval of his teacher’s words, Storyteller immediately withdraws his salacious look and apologizes to his unseen teacher for his improper talk. Storyteller then resumes his focus on the drama. He praises the fact that Ibsen does not end the drama with the violent debate and values Ibsen’s fifth act of En folkefiende. Storyteller slips out the word, *diao*, once more to approve Ibsen’s mastery, but he corrects his own diction, alternate it with saying “No, I meant, brilliant” 高明的地方. The long-lasting and retrieving wordplay after the fourth act still resembles with those previous attempts. It is placed between critical utterances. The audience is driven rapidly from uproarious shoots to ethical lectures. As those comedian attempts before, both criticism and fun are tensed and strengthened.

By the end of the performance, Storyteller does not drop his comedian attempt,

showing his insistence in evoking laughter. Before the curtain call, Storyteller resumes his earlier blasphemous act with altering his teacher's words. Storyteller begins with "the theatre matters" 演劇之事, which is sampled from his teacher's maxim, but he replaces the rest of the sentence with "ultimately for filling our wallets" 關係我們的荷包甚大. Storyteller reminds the spectators, without their steady support by visiting the theatre, the performers on stage will appear at other occasions in their lives, taking various jobs he mentions in the intro.

For the Storyteller's comedian attempts that largely tend to self-ridicule, Wu Shi-Wei 吳世偉, the performer of Storyteller, gives a clear explanation about the motive to joke. In his view, one's purpose to joke is a decisive factor in these attempts. He thinks that the motive to joke is supposed to be simply "to entertain" 讓大家開心的動機, not to distinguish oneself by performing an artful or clever joke. Observed by Wu, most of the jokes with the latter intention end up with being ineffective. Whenever such a conspicuous endeavor is sensed, serving the joke for one's own sake instead of for his listeners, the joke loses its charm. (Wu 2007) Wu's opinion features Storyteller's comedian attempts in the performance. Storyteller repeatedly makes himself ridiculed to arouse the laughter. Hilarity is caused while sympathy for Storyteller is aroused. These enjoyable moments are definitely attributed to be Wu's merit to bring his observation of jokes in the formation of Storyteller.

Interactive Storyteller

Before his very first speech of the intro initiating the entire performance, Storyteller comes towards the center of the stage from a writing table set at the down stage to the

right, repeatedly demonstrating physical movements similar with Chinese martial arts with his exaggeratedly audible breathing. After repeating it for three times, Storyteller kneels down to make a kowtow with a relieved facial expression transformed from his earlier solemn look. While Storyteller is doing it, dimming in the lighting at the auditorium repeats with Storyteller's body movements. After the worshiping kowtow, the theatre turns dark with a beam light drawing all the audience's attention to Storyteller on stage. The performance begins. Storyteller speaks to the audience and explains "What has been just performed is three *ming* 明 [brightening] and three *an* 暗 [darkening]. In the theatre, it indicates the performance is about to begin, so please take your seats as soon as possible."

The set of serial acts before Storyteller's speaking forecasts Storyteller's interactive mode (with the audience and the theatre) during the performance. Storyteller's function is determined by the simple and explanatory act. By the signals in the lighting, the theatre sends messages with its conventions, and Storyteller plays the role of an interface with which the audience decrypts the messages. The first message from this theatrical event is a material one with practical information, but Storyteller's function as the interface shall be generalized in the later sections of the performance to decrypt other types of messages, notably with the conceptual ones.

Storyteller's obeisance-like kowtow can be viewed in two ways. Regarding the audience, Storyteller may attempt to show the obeisance to them. The intention here is echoed at the finale of the performance when Storyteller reveals his economic dependence on the audience's support. With the cultural aspect of the Taiwanese theatre, Storyteller's kowtow reiterates the theatrical events' origination and its

purpose that have been lightened by the contemporary performance studies. Introduced by Chung Ming-De 鍾明德, one of the founders of the College of Drama at Taipei National University of the Arts, Richard Schechner's notion of the influences, which are derived from the ancient rituals, has been gradually known by theatre professionals in Taiwan, especially among the performers.²⁵ The traditional Chinese opera had also its religious application (Zhang 1984: 3). Therefore, Storyteller's kowtow symbolically initiates the performance as a journey to comprehend the true essence of the theatre and its purpose. Storyteller is spiritualized to be the leader, as the sorcerer in rituals, in the upcoming theatre event, representing for his performing colleagues of the event and bowing to the unseen spirit in trepidation for the theatrical magic he is about to conjure. Storyteller's ability to enact necromancy between the theatre and the audience is rendered by the gesture. Claiming his power, Storyteller ensures his totalitarian undoubted control in his arena by the immediate success in arousing the applause among the audience (as discussed in the section of comedian attempt).

Following the implication of his gesture, Storyteller's instructional/instructive function is performed. Storyteller sets the scene by his verbalized explanation. He informs "The scene for the drama is similar with the hometown of the playwright, Ibsen's. It is a small town in the southern Norway. There aren't many natural resources. Just like the stage now, it is empty" (Ren min gong di) While Storyteller

²⁵ Chung was a student of Richard Schechner at Tisch School of the Arts of New York University. His work of Taiwanese "small theatre" mentioned earlier in another note is a Chinese translation of his doctoral dissertation accomplished during his years at Tisch School of the Arts. For introducing Schechner's approach in performance studies, Chung responds his teacher with the preface in Xian Dai Xi Ju Jiang Zuo: Cong Xie Shi Zhu Yi Dao Hou Xian Dai Zhu Yi (現代戲劇講座：從寫實主義到後現代主義, lectures of modern drama: from realism to post-modernism). For the influence from rituals, please refer Schechner's Performance Theory.

locates the drama, he cleverly uses the empty stage to stress his verbal text. Nothing, not a single prop, has been placed on stage. Chamber music arises when Storyteller mentions the playwright. The music used may be one of the factors to enhance the parallel of Our Town and Ren Min Gong Di for the nostalgic atmosphere it creates.

Storyteller continues with introducing the town's past,

工業革命之後，年輕人都到大都市去討生活了，所以這個小城鎮也慢慢地荒廢了下來。直到兩三年前，史醫生回到他從小到大的城鎮，發現了附近的山區竟然有溫泉耶，於是他就把這個新發現告訴給他的親哥哥，也就是當地的市長。市長運用他的領導才能，還有一些職務上面的方便，哼，人嘛，總之他就開始組織委員會，開始募款，投資，做一些溫泉療養院的生意。

After the industrial revolution, the youth moved to big cities to make their livings. The town became shabby for being gradually neglected and unattended. Until two or three years ago, Dr. Shi [Shi Li-Ren] returned to his hometown where he grew up. He discovered natural springs at the nearby mountains and then told his discovery to his brother, the mayor in town. The mayor acted with his talents in leadership. With the convenience derived from his post...the unavoidable human weakness, the mayor started to organize the committees, to raise the funds, and to distribute investments for the business of sanatoria with the spring. The vitality has slowly returned to renew the town, eventually bringing the youth back to the town to start their small businesses.

While Storyteller tells about the town's turn, the silhouette at the back of the stage is seen in the form of the tops of buildings lying together. Indicating the town by making the silhouette, the director makes Dr. Shi and his bother, Shi Li-De, walk by the silhouette when they are mentioned by Storyteller. The stage direction here serves to prove again Storyteller's immediate conjuring ability on stage. Storyteller shows this ability at various occasions, such as the hat for Sang-Ke-Lang delivered onto the stage for Storyteller, switching of the lighting demanded by Storyteller for his entrance. They all show Storyteller's full control of the theatre devices.

After presenting the context of the drama concerning the town, Storyteller proceeds with explaining the scene for the following act. Story introduces "Here is Dr. Shi's home. Entering from the front door, you will see the living room..." Storyteller suggests the audience with distribution of the stage into different sections. While Storyteller is setting "the imagined stage," actors and stagehands begins to move in the props. Storyteller enacts and enforces his magic to conjure by ensuring the appearance of stage props after his evocation. He also immediately regulates the audience's perception of the stage in their sight.

However, a paradoxical statement follows his introduction of the scene at Dr. Shi's place. For completing the stage, Storyteller urges, "Please use your imagination.

Many things on earth are not visible, but that doesn't mean they don't exist" 所以請大家運用想像力，在這個世界上你看不到東西並不代表他不存在喔

Storyteller suggests the audience to enact their "imagination" to fulfill the unseen parts on stage. On the contrary, Storyteller gives clear description to regulate the

audience's imaginative stage. As discussed, this features is shown when Storyteller presents the criticism of the media on examining the narrative. Storyteller claims that he want the audience to be cautious, but virtually compels the audience to follow its perspective by making immediate assertion, greatly intervening the audience's perception of almost everything. Wang's notion of the default, the disguise of objectivity, caused by the *shuoshu* masters' impact on fiction is seen here again in Storyteller.

When Storyteller introduces Kai-Lin 凱琳, as Katrine Stockmann, to the audience, Kai-Lin is troubled by being unable to leave the kettle on a cabinet for it has not been placed to its assigned location on stage. The actress who plays Kai-Lin responds to the misplacing with the character she created, acting the confused housewife in daily routines instead of revealing an actress' worry for a missed stage prop. Storyteller sees the trouble and assists Kai-Ling, a character in the drama, with directing stagehands' help, which is not involved within the drama. Storyteller becomes the magic medium crossing between the world of drama and the world of the present theatre.

Nevertheless, the opening passage does not only display Storyteller's absolute power in theatrical magic. By its informative commentary of the town, Storyteller immediately revives the omniscient master in the traditional Chinese storytelling at a very early stage of the performance. The audience senses the hint. From now on, they can rely on Storyteller not only for sensuous indication through material aspects in theatre, but also for abstract or conceptual interpretation of the drama, characters, and consequences when they are confronted by evasiveness in these aspects during the performance. As discussed above, Storyteller makes several comments on characters

through the performance and his authority has been established through his instructive guidance of the stage scene. Storyteller enacts this feature in his interludes between acts where he clearly presents the consequences and reasons them to set the path for the following act.

Storyteller uses the occasions that appear insignificant to ensure his instructions to be perceived as the certified reading of the performance. Therefore, these minor events on stages actually facilitate to structure the path for Storyteller to insert its interpretation without being conspicuously deliberate. Storyteller's expressive mode, which resembles *shuoshu* performance, is virtually benefited by the legacy of the old Chinese performing arts. The audience's familiarity with this expressive style enables Storyteller to rotate freely between the roles of the instructor, the entertainer, and the commentator without interrupting the continuity in the drama. My discussion may seem to emphasize on details in the relatively short passages performed by Storyteller, and appear to be hackneyed in repeating certain sections in Storyteller's performance. However, my aim is to feature these short, but rather representative, parts to contour Storyteller's merits in functioning as the interface for the audience's understanding of the drama and, certainly, as the convenient tool for the adaptor to imply his criticism. Therefore, Storyteller's critical, comedian, and interactive characteristics are strongly tied together in a Chinese manner to serve for conveying *dao*, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. A close observation of Storyteller actually enhances the understanding of how the perception is formed in the culture.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Before concluding, I would like to stress again that the aim of my discussion is neither to trace the direct references between the Taiwanese society nowadays and the performance nor to attribute Chung's merits in his adaptation fully to the preceding *shuoshu* performers, though I apply readings into these two aspects to enhance the understanding of the messages sent by the adaptation. My aim is closer to Lan's notion, which focuses on "the art to tell the truth."

To me, Storyteller first appeared as a convenient and entertaining stagecraft that excites and wakes the audience in a long battle at the theatre. Storyteller admits himself too before the interval, jeering with "if anyone feeling dozy, try to wake up now. We are about to take a fifteen minutes break" 如果剛才有誰不是很清醒的現在可以清醒了因為我們要中場休息十五分鐘. Storyteller's immediate hilarity is certain. However, after the detailed observation in its non-sense jokes and socio-philosophical inspections that are intricately wired in Storyteller's utterance, the effectiveness of the stagecraft resembling the peculiar Chinese storytelling is justified. Repeating my observations in the previous chapter, the compound of the comedian attempts and criticism benefits both in being firmly perceived by the spectators.

In examining “the art to tell the truth,” I find the adaptor’s great dependence on the stagecraft he applies. Though the adaptor inevitably renders certain perspectives in Storyteller’s criticism, but he does not omit the essential issue—the necessary discernment in all types of media—and distributes a long session and various short reminders scattered in the entire performance. In presenting this significant lesson for all the individuals situated in the modern society that makes encounters with the mass media unavoidable, Chung and Storyteller’s cooperation is extraordinarily impressive.

After Chung’s tour to Dhaka, the Taiwanese society underwent a series of greatest turmoil in the recent years. Mr. Chen Shui-Bian陳水扁, the present Taiwanese president, and his family were charged with corruption. So far, his son in law has already been convicted at the first trial. A local TV news channel, TVBS-N, seized the chance to continuously attack the president Chen in varied programs, but the real intention has been interpreted as to be the revenge for the penalty and accusation that TVBS-N incurred earlier for breaking the regulations in gathering foreign capital for the business. One of founders of the president Chen’s political party, Shi Ming-De施明德, provoked his opposition against his old-time comrade and led serial demonstrations demanding the president to step down. His demonstrations also evoked the supporters for the president Chen to organize their own ones to counterattack, blaming Shi and the KMT, the opposition party, for their intentional hindering of the nation’s unification and cooperation. Violent scenes were seen intensively in TV news while the demonstrations were ongoing. Ren Min Gong Di ended its tour in Dhaka, but the social context in which it resides puts on the endless drama found in Ibsen’s play.

Therefore, Chung's attempt to evoke the awareness to examine the media, the governors, the school education, and so on may be cliché-ridden, but it can be rather relevant for the Taiwanese spectators. In Chung's production, Characterization by performers, costumes, and stage design may not be that helpful in aiming at the adaptor's ultimate motivation to stage En folkefiende, but it does not demolish Chung's merits to creatively render the socio-political criticism by applying a stagecraft truly local and definitely original. Meanwhile, the stagecraft chosen shows the sophisticated formation of perception. In my reading of this actual production from Taiwan, I may legitimately agree with Yearn Hong Choi's suggestion mentioned in my introduction chapter. Chung's application of Ibsen's play largely enhances the understanding of the Taiwanese society as Choi hopes to enhance the public's participation in environmental matters by Ibsen's play. The eternal Chinese storyteller enlightens the Chinese audience's understanding of Ibsen's play and their innate being rendered by the cultural factors.

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Appendix I

The Chinese dynasties²⁶

Zhou dynasty 周 1111-256 B.C.

²⁶ The division of periods for the dynasties follows Tung Tso-Pin董作賓's Chronological Tables of Chinese History中國年曆總譜 (1960).

Qin dynasty 秦 255 – 207 B.C.

Han dynasty 漢 206 B.C. – 220 A.D.

Three Kingdoms 三國 221-264 A.D.

Jin dynasty 晉 265-419 A.D.

Southern and Northern dynasties 南北朝 420-589 A.D.

Sui dynasty 隋 590-617 A.D.

Tang dynasty 唐 619-906 A.D.

Five Dynasties and Ten States 五代十國 907-959 A.D.

Song dynasty 宋 960-1279 A.D.

Northern Song 北宋 960-1126A.D.

Southern Song 南宋 1127-1279A.D.

Yuan dynasty 元 1280-1367 A.D.

Ming dynasty 明 1368-1661A.D.

Qing dynasty 清 1662-1911A.D.